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Official Records

President: Mr. Razali Ismail .... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mkapa: Permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Ambassador Razali, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Your election is a fitting tribute to your distinguished career in diplomacy, an expression of confidence in your abilities and a reflection of the high regard in which you and your country, Malaysia, are held by the international community. You have our confidence, and I can assure you of Tanzania's full support and cooperation as you guide the deliberations of this session. I commend also your predecessor, Mr. Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who very ably presided over the historic fiftieth session of the Assembly.

My appreciation goes also to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a distinguished son of Africa, who for the past five years has worked tirelessly to enhance the image of the Organization as well as its ability to meet the challenges of the rapidly evolving international environment. He has provided dedicated leadership at a particularly difficult time in the history of the United Nations, enduring often unwarranted personal criticism even as he was operating in a situation of diminishing resources on the one hand, and escalating, often conflicting, expectations on the other hand.

My predecessor in office stood at this rostrum exactly two years ago and, in bidding farewell to the United Nations, spoke of the political transition then under way in my country and of preparations for the first multi-party elections in Tanzania in over 30 years. He underlined his intention to bequeath to the people of Tanzania a functioning democracy leveraged upon a shared national culture of political accommodation and tolerance. Today, I am proud to be here as a product of that process of transition, to reaffirm our commitment and abiding faith in the United Nations in its endeavour to promote international peace and security as well as economic and social development throughout the world.

The United Nations has, since its inception, expanded its role in the international system tremendously, becoming a major player in national development and international cooperation. The various summits that it has organized in recent years, coupled

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with its numerous activities covering the entire spectrum of political, social and economic spheres, in all corners of the world, is testimony to the critical role of the United Nations in resolving the national and international problems facing mankind.

The United Nations has helped maintain international peace and security at very critical times. It has overseen the delivery of peoples and nations from the shackles of colonialism and institutionalized racism to independence. As a result of these efforts, membership has increased almost fourfold. The ideals of freedom and justice and human rights are understood by most of the world, even if they may not always be observed. The United Nations has built a common global culture of shared values, and it has also helped in promoting development, building social and economic infrastructures and much more.

Today, the United Nations stands at a crossroads. New challenges, not least those brought about by a rapidly changing international environment, keep demanding its undivided attention. The challenge before us, as we stand on the threshold of the new millennium, is to invigorate and reinforce this Organization, drawing upon the collective resources and knowledge of our world and acting in partnership.

Likewise, the ideal we all share for participatory democracy in each Member country needs to find expression on the international plane as well. In the course of the last few years, we have agonized over the process of reform within this Organization. We all want an efficient and revitalized United Nations — one that is more attuned to the realities we live with and capable of meeting the new challenges we face. We must reform its methods of work and bring greater institutional and policy coherence into the Organization. Adjustment and realignment are necessary processes for the renewal and continued relevance of this Organization. Tanzania salutes all those individuals, institutions and Governments that have contributed to this process of review.

It is our hope, however, that any reform will preserve and enhance the basic principles underlying the United Nations. We want reform — but only the kind of reform that will ultimately strengthen the hand of our Organization in promoting its ideals. We want greater transparency in the work of our institutions, and the reinforcement of the principles of sovereign equality of States and justice. We need democratization of our institutions, and greater balance in representation on the Security Council between the developed North and the developing South.

We cannot, however, expect the United Nations to be, and do, all this and more without giving it the means with which to work. Meeting our financial obligations to the Organization must, therefore, complement our demands upon the Organization and serve to demonstrate our commitment to the ideals it seeks to promote.

Just as we have the right to applaud the achievements of the United Nations, we must also have the courage to concede that it has yet to make a dent in the scourge of abject poverty that afflicts the greater part of its membership. This is where we must now direct its attention and resources. The 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen was a good starting point, and we must implement the letter and spirit of the commitments made there. Unless the issue of poverty is addressed comprehensively, we cannot achieve meaningful and enduring peace. We must restore the development agenda to the heart of the philosophy and work of the United Nations.

The world is largely considered peaceful because there has not been a third world war. Yet, for those who are menaced by regional conflicts, for the victims of oppression and injustice, and for those who subsist in unremitting poverty amid a world of plenty, their world is at war. Taken together, these people account for the largest part of the world population, and the United Nations must give them the attention they deserve today. Our United Nations cannot speak of a peaceful world when the future of our children — and their right to grow up as children — is undermined by conflict and poverty, and when urban squalor is breeding anarchy in local communities. Peace must be pursued in a comprehensive manner, taking account of these equal, if not greater, threats to peace within societies and among countries.

Our collective shame at poverty amid riches must find expression in our joint action to promote development. Today, the developing world is bombarded by many development initiatives. We are urged to work harder, to liberalize our economies, to cut Government spending, to institute sound macroeconomic policies, to promote the private sector and a host of other measures. Invariably, our countries have done so, quite often at great social expense, the magnitude of which developed countries would not countenance in their own economies.

We have done so in the knowledge that ultimately it is we who must take the bull by the horns. Indeed, we accept that we must be more competitive in the market place and bring greater efficiency to Government. We need to use our resources more rationally; we need to fight waste and corruption in Government; we need to streamline our bureaucratic processes, liberalize our economies and open our markets to international commerce. That is why most of us are signatories to the establishment of the new world trade regime under the auspices of the World Trade Organization. Yet our capacity to access, and benefit from, the global markets — the markets of the developed world — is constrained by our underdevelopment, the protectionist policies of the industrialized countries, and the ever-deteriorating terms of trade.

Unregulated market forces will not help the very weak, poor and vulnerable countries, whose special circumstances and needs must be attended to. For us, that is the priority agenda for the World Trade Organization, not the introduction of new issues before we perfect the system we have now. The Ruggiero plan to extend tariff-free access in the markets of industrialized countries to products from developing countries is welcome and deserves wide support.

We now need a mutually beneficial creative partnership between the developed North and the developing South. Sustainable economic recovery and growth in the South is beneficial to the North as well. Only a prosperous South will be a more meaningful player in global commerce. We shall then be able to buy more from the North, thus freeing the conscience of the developed world from the unending obligation to extend charity, and control illegal immigration. This creative partnership must also recognize the interdependent nature of our world and how ultimately we affect each other. To help the South recover is not an act of simple charity but of building the foundations for a more secure and stable world. We made a call for action at the ninth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IX) at Midrand in South Africa earlier this year. We must reiterate that call today.

Tanzania, like the rest of the developing countries, is determined to face its responsibilities for economic and human development. We cannot, however, make meaningful progress when the millstone of external debt continues to hang around our necks, stifling recovery and growth. The question of the unbearable external debt must be addressed urgently if our creative partnership against global poverty is to bear fruit.

Many proposals for debt relief have been discussed over time. We recognize and appreciate these initiatives, including the recent proposals for extraordinary debt relief measures for a selected group of severely indebted countries. The fact remains, however, that no comprehensive action is imminent save for limited measures taken unilaterally, on a case-by-case basis. Urgent, coordinated and comprehensive action remains necessary to alleviate this debt burden, including the cancellation of the debts of least developed countries, whose servicing obligations gobble up their entire earnings. Only then can we hope for an economic turnaround for them. It is the duality of debt cancellation and access to markets that will enable countries like Tanzania to benefit in a liberalized world market place, and hasten the pace of social and economic development.

Another heavy burden for developing countries, especially those without fossil fuel sources of energy, is the cost input of energy for development. In this connection, I wish to hail the World Solar Summit, held on 16 and 17 September 1996 in Harare, which helped to focus world political attention on the urgent and imperative need to provide reliable, sustainable and clean sources of energy to all the people of the world, including to the 400 million homes and the 2.4 billion people in the developing world who currently have no access to electricity. We all know that, without electricity, no rapid development of those communities will be forthcoming.

The Harare Summit agreed on a framework for a 10-year solar energy programme. We must all give it the political support it needs and deserves if it is to be effective. At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, we all agreed that failure to develop sustainable and clean sources of energy would result in problems for all of us, rich and poor alike. Deforestation in Africa, Latin America and Asia will affect the countries involved and not involved alike. As long as 92.8 per cent of the energy requirements in Tanzania are met from wood fuel, there is no way that the Government can protect the natural forests unless alternative sources of energy are available at affordable rates. It is in the interest of all humanity and of future generations to facilitate the development of alternative, affordable, sustainable and clean sources of energy for everyone.

Tanzania is concerned at the lack of progress in the implementation of the United Nations peace plan for Western Sahara. The international community cannot and must not retreat from this unfinished business. We must reaffirm the inalienable right of the Sahraoui people to self-determination and independence and, to that end, support the holding of a free and fair referendum. We urge the two sides, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Polisario, to initiate direct talks, which would create a climate of confidence and permit the resumption of the implementation of the settlement plan.

We wish to keep our hopes alive with regard to the situation in the Middle East and earnestly call for faster and strict implementation of the peace accords. The Israeli Government has a particular responsibility in this respect. We reached a time when we thought that our dreams for the peaceful coexistence of the Palestinian people and the Israeli people were on the verge of coming true. We commend all those who have been instrumental in promoting the peace process. We urge greater restraint on all sides, which must accept that the secure way to sustainable peace and security is through negotiation.

I shall now turn to the Burundi crisis. We see our role in Burundi as one not of benevolence, but of duty — duty to help our brothers and sisters there to step back from the brink of mutual destruction to the middle ground of dialogue, political accommodation and national reconciliation. We began our efforts within the Organization of African Unity and gradually turned over the task of bringing the political forces in sustained dialogue to former President, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, within the framework of the Mwanza talks. Not only was the military coup of 25 July 1996 an illegal and unconstitutional act; it also undermined the efforts in the region to promote dialogue and restore peace to that most tormented country. The coup is unacceptable to all regional leaders and we demand a return to legitimacy and a negotiated political settlement that will guarantee democracy and the security of minorities.

In order to speed up the process of compliance, the region has imposed economic sanctions on Burundi. Those sanctions will remain in place until all the conditions set at Arusha are met by the military rulers in Bujumbura. These are not unreasonable conditions. They are the restoration of the National Assembly, which is a democratic institution of legality that derived its mandate from the Burundian people; removing the ban on political parties in the country; and the resumption of unconditional political negotiations with all the parties to the conflict. We have, at the same time, made it clear to the Burundi people that the sanctions are meant only to secure the compliance of their military rulers with these conditions, and nothing more. Once this has been done, Tanzania, the region and, indeed, the international community have all reiterated that they are prepared to resume their assistance and cooperation in the process of restoring peace and rebuilding that country. We can all pledge our help, but the challenge of making peace is one that only the Burundian people and those who claim leadership of that country can shoulder. The onus of bringing peace to their county rests squarely upon their shoulders. The key to a sustainable solution is in their own hands. We can only help.

At the same time we, the neighbours and the rest of the international community, have an inescapable responsibility to save the Burundian people from self-destruction. We cannot stand by and watch the perpetuation of killings, the steady degeneration of the security situation and the catastrophe they portend for the country and the subregion.

As we seek to help the Burundian people retrace the path of dialogue, we remain preoccupied by the fragility of the political situation in the Great Lakes region as a whole. While Rwanda is steadily progressing along the path of recovery, the wounds of war and genocide have yet to heal. That country needs the solidarity and support of the international community.

One of the serious consequences of conflict in the region has been the massive human displacement, and refugees now constitute a tremendous burden for the neighbouring countries. Tanzania is currently hosting over 1 million refugees from Rwanda and Burundi. The implications of their presence in such large numbers within limited localities have been tremendous in terms of the destruction of the environment, increased insecurity and criminality, and the social and economic burden they have imposed upon the host communities. The traditional hospitality of Tanzanians towards refugees is wearing very thin indeed.

We appreciate the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian agencies in offering protection and succour to the refugees. What they have done is very useful, but it is not enough to offset the burden that these refugees place upon our communities. We call upon the international community, in the name of human solidarity, to redouble its assistance to meet the urgent needs of these refugees, while at the same time addressing the long-term effects attendant on hosting them. Above all, we must help both Rwanda and Burundi to address the root causes of these human displacements. The ultimate goal must be the voluntary repatriation of the refugees to their home countries. To us, the creation of an environment that will facilitate such a process of repatriation is now a priority.

Whether in Liberia, Somalia or elsewhere in the world, we see the need for courage and statesmanship to defeat the temptations of political unilateralism and promote dialogue and greater human solidarity. The courage to rise above deep-seated prejudices and fears — the courage to depart from traditional rigidity that has made conflict endemic in some parts of the world — is the key that will open up a new era of dialogue, political accommodation and national concord. We have seen how such courage and statesmanship can reverse long-standing hostilities and build on the realism of our shared destiny as human beings. The Middle East, Bosnia and Herzegovina, South Africa and Angola are cases in point. Difficulties remain, but we have crossed the Rubicon and, with determination, we can maintain a steady pace towards peace in these and other areas around the world. The United Nations played a key role in this task. It will have to play an even greater role in consolidating the progress towards peace.

The end of the cold war did not, unfortunately, usher in the spring of collective peace and the blossoming of the flowers of international cooperation. The world is still divided — even if not on ideological lines — between those who are armed and those who are unarmed. Vast nuclear arsenals remain and their technological improvement continues unabated. The hopes for collective peace run the risk of being thwarted by the unilateralism of those who are armed with the most deadly weapons. My country is concerned about the vertical proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the unremitting desire of those who have them to rationalize their possession. This undermines peace.

Since the coming into force two years ago of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, we have witnessed the establishment of the various institutions envisaged in the Convention. We are pleased that, at long last, there is positive movement towards ensuring the regularized use of the oceans and their resources to the benefit of all people the world over. The Government of Tanzania attaches great importance to ensuring that the make-up of the International Seabed Authority in its formative years is so structured as to facilitate the carrying out of its responsibilities in the manner envisaged in the Convention and implementation Agreement of 1994.

The establishment of the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea has added a fillip to the Convention, and the election of its judges last August was another milestone in the work of the United Nations. In this connection, we express our appreciation to the States Parties to the Convention on the Law of the Sea for electing a Tanzanian, The Honourable Joseph S. Warioba, as one of the judges of the Tribunal. We congratulate all members of the Tribunal on being entrusted with such an historic mission.

The founding of the United Nations was inspired by the human solidarity which the world sought to promote five decades ago. It is that solidarity which our nations gathered here last year to commemorate. What holds our nations together, despite their diversity, is the common bond and solidarity we feel for each other as human beings.

Today, more than ever before, we need that solidarity in order to deal with the myriad problems we all face together: the problems of poverty and underdevelopment, peace and security, justice and human rights, disarmament and the environment, international terrorism and drug trafficking and many others. All require joint and coordinated international action. Those more powerful amongst us can try to solve these problems unilaterally, but in order for their efforts to bear fruit, they too need the cooperation of everyone. That is why I invite this Assembly to embark on a mission to rediscover human solidarity and to build structures for global partnership, the better world which the founding fathers of this Organization set out to establish 51 years ago.

As an African leader, I wish to end my speech by commending and supporting the United Nations Secretary-General for the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa he launched on 15 March of this year, which seeks to provide coordinated action across the entire United Nations system over a 10-year period to address the unique development needs of the African continent. It is my hope that coming in the wake of the Copenhagen Social Summit, it will benefit from that Summit's commitments and create the kind of impact that has long been missing in previous summit declarations and plans of action.

Africa is a continent with an ancient and rich history. It is richly endowed with human and natural resources. I have great hopes for Africa and, being part of its new leadership, I pledge to work with anyone who shares my conviction that Africa is positioned for political and economic renewal, reform and reconstruction for development. Together, we can realize the dream of a more peaceful, a more developed and a more respected continent. Together, we can realize the dream of a world closer than ever to the ideals set out in the United Nations Charter over 50 years ago.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Republic of Tanzania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the Republic of Tanzania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Mr. Vaughan Lewis, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Planning and Development, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Information of Saint Lucia

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Planning and Development, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Information of Saint Lucia.

The Honourable Mr. Vaughan Lewis, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Planning and Development, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Information of Saint Lucia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Planning and Development, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Information of Saint Lucia, His Excellency The Honourable Mr. Vaughan Lewis, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Lewis (Saint Lucia): One year ago, representatives of Member States gathered in this hallowed Hall and sang songs of praise in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of this venerable Organization. One year ago, we faced the challenges of a changing international system and the dawn of the new millennium with courage and hope and in the belief that its noble ideals would guide the actions of States, great and small, in their relations with their fellow Members.

But now that the cheering and shouting have died and the vivid memories of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations have started to wane, small countries like ours, Saint Lucia, are forced to face the realities of survival — realities far harsher than what the bliss of that anniversary promised.

It will be difficult to forget the lofty principles expounded during the anniversary or the excitement of celebrating the historic liquidation of apartheid in South Africa and the restoration of democracy in Haiti. But the speeches of this Assembly had hardly faded, the lights of this Hall hardly dimmed, when my country Saint Lucia and its sister islands of the Caribbean began to feel the full blast of international hostility towards the arrangements for the marketing of our main export commodity, the banana, in the European Union, arrangements which are enshrined in the treaty establishing the Fourth Lomé Convention between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific States.

The reality of size and vulnerability always creates an awareness, a perception and a kind of resilience in small States that make them philosophical about adversity. Consequently, we will continue to support the high ideals of this institution, but today we must focus on the hard options presented to us by the myopia of some large trading nations.

At the historic fiftieth session of this Assembly, Saint Lucia took the opportunity to spell out to the nations of the world the very serious consequences which would befall our small Caribbean economies if certain countries pursued their intention to challenge the European banana regime by invoking Section 301 action at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The United States of America itself is now pursuing this action in response to an application by certain American multinational companies involved in the trade, and other large banana-producing countries have followed their lead.

The battle is now fully engaged within the World Trade Organization, but the conditions of war are anything but equal and the playing field is anything but even. For example, at the behest of the complainants, the small countries of the Caribbean have been denied full participation in the hearings of the WTO panel, despite the fact that we are the ones who will be most affected by the WTO ruling, whatever that may be.

The diplomatic war being waged against the marketing arrangements of our main export commodity in the name of free trade emphasizes to small nations the monumental insensitivity of some of those participating in the process of globalization and trade liberalization now sweeping the international community. In a process that ignores the special circumstances of the small and the vulnerable, nations like Saint Lucia and regions like the Caribbean can quickly become marginalized.

Let it be understood that we are not against the process of change in world trade, the globalization of the world economy or the economic integration of continents, a process currently under way. We do not wish to be Luddites in our view of the evolving international system and thus we welcome these directions. But, on behalf of the peoples whom we represent, on behalf of the peoples of all small States, we have the right to point out the dangers these trends pose for small, developing economies if compensating mechanisms are not put in place. We need to tell the world that these trends, these changes in international economic affairs, have not lessened the vulnerability of small developing States, but have in some respects accentuated them. We need to remind this body that, as the international community seeks to fashion a new global economic system, it is imperative that it not lose sight of the special needs of small States, particularly small island developing countries.

The untrammelled pursuit of free trade for the sake of free trade cannot be the guiding philosophy of our Member States. Unbridled free trade which relegates some Member States, and in particular those with small open economies, to the position of suffering spectators cannot be acceptable. It is even less acceptable when we realize that some of the very nations that are championing the case of unrestricted trade liberalization do not themselves scrupulously observe that philosophy. Some of them grant huge subsidies to their farmers in order to allow them to continue in production, yet they complain that our small farmers are not efficient producers.

Consequently, it is incumbent on the international community to make provisions for the special needs of small States in this rapidly changing international system. In the creation of free-trade areas that span continents and integrate hemispheres, there must be special provisions for the very small economies of our countries, particularly in regions where there are small island developing States. In that regard, we welcome the fact that, in the discussions on the proposed free-trade area of the Americas, a working group on smaller economies has been established to facilitate the participation of the small economies in that process.

For despite the changing features of the international system, the forces that threaten the existence of these States have not altered. Small island States are still very vulnerable, for example, to natural disasters. Some of the economies of our fellow Member States from the Caribbean have yet to recover from the effects of the ravages of last year's hurricanes. And in the island of Montserrat, we have a classic example of the magnitude of the damage which a natural disaster — in this case persistent volcanic activity — can wreak on small island developing economies.

The plight of that small Territory is an extreme but tragically powerful symbol of why the special needs of small island developing States cannot be ignored as the international community seeks to define new rules and economic relationships for the next millennium. The international community and international economic institutions must therefore bear in mind that, while they have categorized some of us as middle-income developing countries and therefore as no longer requiring concessionary aid flows, the economic indices utilized to arrive at these classifications cannot mask the continuing reality of the vulnerability of these countries.

We will, however, continue within the severe limitations of size and resources to diversify and restructure our economies, to increase efficiency and productivity and to adapt to the new realities. We will rely on the support of States Members of this Organization in this regard.

There are other States in the Caribbean whose particular situation also deserves the special attention of this body. Saint Lucia once again urges the international community to increase its technical, economic and financial assistance to Haiti to foster development and stability in that sister country of ours. The end of the United Nations Mission should not diminish international development support for Haiti. This is even more urgently needed now to maintain and strengthen the gains achieved in the restoration of what is still a fledgling democracy and to enhance its fragile stability.

Again, Saint Lucia joins its Caribbean colleagues in calling for an end to the economic blockade of Cuba. Three decades of denial have not achieved democracy. The economic embargo against Cuba is a policy which can hardly be called relevant in this era and it is therefore time to try the more effective alternative of dialogue, discourse and openness.

In the wider international community, we are heartened by the new impetus given to the revitalization and development of Africa and encourage Member States to continue to support this initiative. But we are saddened by the persistence of ethnic disturbances in some areas of that continent — ethnic troubles which only serve to impede the very development process which Member States are trying to promote. We therefore urge the United Nations and regional organizations in Africa to develop mechanisms for conciliation with regard to these conflicts.

Saint Lucia also wishes to express its deep concern at the recent revival of conflict in the Middle East. Is it not time to end the anguish, to stop the pain? Is it not time to halt the shedding of the blood of the ordinary people of these lands? Is it not time to bring a permanent peace to a land that means so much to so much of mankind? But the path to true peace can only be through dialogue and conciliation and we urge all parties to return to this road, for anything which is not built on that foundation will not stand.

While Saint Lucia continues to promote the unification of China, we still hold the view that Taiwan should be given the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the work of the United Nations. Taiwan is a vibrant and growing democracy, capable of meeting its obligations to this institution. As a highly developed economy, Taiwan is also capable of contributing to the growth of other smaller, less developed economies of the world. At a time when the Powers that have traditionally assisted the economic development of our countries have significantly reduced the level and quality of their support, new sources of assistance should not be ignored. We are confident that this body can find a creative mechanism through which Taiwan can be involved in the programmes of the Organization. That involvement in the work of the United Nations should in no way preclude unification.

We hope that this fifty-first session will not conclude without significant progress in correcting the inequitable composition of the Security Council. Saint Lucia will continue to work within our regional and other groups to achieve the goal of strengthening the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, institutionalizing the process of briefing and consultation and developing greater transparency and predictability.

As a small nation caught up in the dynamics of globalization and trade liberalization, Saint Lucia looks eagerly and hopefully to the principles and ideals of the United Nations to offer some comfort, some protection and some measure of security in our uncertain entry into the new century. All the indications that herald the approach of this new age seem to tell us that small nations should find their path to development through the process of integration.

We as a nation have a solid track record in attempting to forge deep and meaningful links between all States members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Caribbean Community. In both organizations, we continue to build viable mechanisms and institutions which will achieve a meaningful consolidation of the various units of the Caribbean Community. We have progressed even further and participated in the launching of a brave initiative, the Association of Caribbean States. This Association ignores the barriers of race, language and culture and seeks to unify all countries which border and are part of the Caribbean Sea.

We urge this Organization, through its various agencies, to continue to provide support for the regional integration efforts of developing countries. On many occasions in the past, it has been the work of some of the United Nations agencies which has helped sustain some of these regional economic integration schemes and given them the impetus to move forward. For its part, Saint Lucia will continue to toil in the cause of the closer union of the peoples and States of the Caribbean because this is the only logic for our survival. This is the path to the enhancement of the quality of life of our peoples.

The plight which our country faces as a result of the manipulation of the European banana market regime and of the unconscionable pressures exerted by the activities of some States on that market, is desperate. We wish to remind the Assembly that we are relying on the principles and ideals of this body to stand firmly in the corner of the small and vulnerable and to frustrate the designs of some multinational corporations which threaten our livelihood. We reiterate our call to the United Nations to develop a framework of international review and regulations regarding the activities and policies of transnational corporations, which are assuming leviathan proportions in world trade.

I commend you, Sir, on your elevation to the presidency of the General Assembly at fifty-first session and pledge Saint Lucia's support for the successful execution of your enormous responsibilities. My country also pledges with customary diligence to assist the United Nations in implementing the goals of the Charter and fostering the spirit of freedom and independence which the fiftieth anniversary year of the Organization emphasized. Our small size will not be a deterrent in our pursuit of democracy and peace.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Fiance, Planning and Development, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Information of Saint Lucia for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Vaughan Lewis, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Planning and Development, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Information of Saint Lucia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique, His Excellency Mr. Leonardo Santos Simão.

Mr. Simão (Mozambique): On behalf of my delegation, and on my own behalf, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. I am convinced that your qualities of a gifted diplomat devoted to the cause of peace and understanding among peoples will ensure a successful outcome of our deliberations. I pledge my delegation's full support as you discharge your noble responsibilities.

I would like to seize this opportunity to commend the brilliant manner in which your predecessor, Mr. Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, presided over the proceedings of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Let me also pay a well-deserved tribute to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his continued contribution and personal commitment to the ideals of international peace and security.

We celebrate today the fourth anniversary of the establishment of a peaceful Mozambique after a long period of uncertainty in our history. It has been a period of great challenges and sacrifices, but also of great excitement for all Mozambicans. With peace, we are gradually healing the wounds caused by the war and our young multi-party democracy is flourishing and consolidating its roots. The Assembly of the Republic, our Parliament, has been meeting regularly, symbolizing our collective desire to work together for the consolidation of peace, national reconstruction and democracy. Similarly, efforts are being made to implement the Government's five-year programme, in which the reduction of absolute poverty, with emphasis on education, health, rural development and job creation, continues to be our major objective.

At the same time, preparations are being made with a view to beginning next year the holding of municipal elections, thus complementing the process initiated in 1994 with the holding of the first multi-party general and presidential elections. In view of financial and other constraints, the Government anticipates that municipal elections will take place on a gradual basis. However, the final decision will be made by the Assembly of the Republic itself, following the completion of the ongoing debate on the subject.

What is important in our view is that elections take place, for they represent an opportunity for the people to choose their local representatives, identify and solve local problems and define their own needs and priorities. The Government is also addressing, as a matter of urgency, the establishment and strengthening of all the different tribunals envisaged in the Constitution, with a view to enabling the normal functioning of the judiciary system as an important step forward in the efforts to strengthen the rule of law, democracy and respect for individual rights and freedoms.

Furthermore, we continue to be fully committed to ensuring public safety and security. To this end, my Government has recently submitted to donor countries a project proposal in order to begin the process of upgrading the technical capacity of the police, thus enabling that institution to deal more effectively with crime prevention, control and other challenges. These include continuing the search for and destruction of arms throughout the country and dealing with transnational crimes, particularly drug trafficking and money laundering.

Furthermore, demining continues to be one of my Government's top priorities. For us, demining is not an end *per se*. Rather, it is a process which we regard as an integral part of the overall national development process. Where possible, it has been our policy to stimulate the launching of agricultural production and related activities once demining is completed. However, given the magnitude of the land-mine issue in Mozambique, resulting from many years of conflict, additional resources are needed effectively to address this problem in the years ahead, in particular within the framework of strengthening the national capacity for demining.

From this rostrum, I would like to express my gratitude to all those countries and organizations which have contributed to the demining programme in Mozambique. We look forward to continuing work together with a view to eliminating these horrible weapons not only in Mozambique, but also in all countries affected by this evil. Accordingly, and in line with my last year's statement before this Assembly, my Government reiterate sits full support to the call for an international agreement against the production, stockpiling and use of anti-personal land-mines.

Recently, my Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) concluded the repatriation and resettlement of Mozambican citizens who had sought refuge in neighbouring countries during the armed conflict. This programme, initiated as a result of a memorandum of understanding signed in March 1993 with UNHCR and subsequent agreements, has been regarded as one of the biggest and most successful repatriation programmes ever undertaken by UNHCR. Thanks to this programme, around 1.7 million Mozambicans have safely and voluntarily returned to their places of origin. We are now proud to say that there are no more Mozambicans living abroad as refugees.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, the challenges before us are immense. We are aware of the difficulties facing this segment of our population and the long road still ahead before we can declare them economically safe and ready to live on their own. This is where the assistance of the international community is most needed and appreciated.

With the end of the repatriation process and the resettlement of these populations, there has been significant progress in agricultural production. As a matter of fact, recorded agricultural output in certain areas of Mozambique this year is the highest since independence. The main problem we face now is that of the financial capacity to buy and store adequately the surplus of this production. We need support to build warehouses within the framework of the food security programme.

Like many other developing countries, Mozambique has been undergoing a structural adjustment programme since 1987. The core objectives of the programme were, *inter alia*, to create and adjust the country's macroeconomic policy, ensure a correct legal and regulatory framework for the development of a strong market economy, provide a transparent and accountable policy framework aimed at promoting investment, allocate adequate budgetary resources for social programmes, create the necessary conditions for the establishment and consolidation of democratic institutions and support good governance and political stability.

After almost 10 years of implementation of this programme under the most adverse conditions, some progress has been achieved. Nevertheless, the overall objectives, including specifically the upgrading of the living standards of the population, are still far from being achieved. In some cases living standards of working people have, in fact, deteriorated in recent years, which may erode the political support needed for the continuation of the reforms.

As of next year, Mozambique will have to start meeting its debt-servicing obligations to multilateral institutions, as this category of debt has not been eligible for rescheduling so far. The debt burden, coupled with very restrictive monetary policies and related measures pursued in connection with the structural adjustment programme, will certainly have a serious negative impact on the performance of the national economy. Unless measures are taken to address this situation, it will be very difficult for the country to sustain the envisaged political, economic and social targets required to uplift the living standards of the people. The situation of my country's indebtedness is a critical one, indeed, as it has increased by about six per cent during the last two years. In 1994, debt servicing alone absorbed about 93 per cent of the country's total export earnings and represented about 28.6 per cent of gross domestic product. This scenario is likely to remain, under the prevailing circumstances, for the next few years. Therefore, my Government supports the view that a comprehensive effort should be made to effectively address the external indebtedness of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries undertaking painful structural adjustment programmes and whose growth prospects continue to be severely undermined by this burden.

In order to address official bilateral debt problems, the Naples Terms, adopted by the Paris Club, in favour of the poorest and most indebted countries should be expeditiously implemented. At the same time, we believe non-Paris Club creditors which have not done so should also consider taking appropriate relief measures to alleviate the suffering of debtor nations. Measures announced at the recently held Lyon Summit could not have been more timely. We look forward to welcoming their early implementation.

As I speak on this subject, I would like to launch an emphatic appeal for a closer partnership between debtors and creditors. We have recently been pleased to note that, at the political level, there appears to be a growing understanding of developing countries' concerns over the issue of the external debt crisis. We would therefore be deeply appreciative if this understanding were translated into tangible results and if the subsequent technical discussions held following political consultations were much more fruitful. Regrettably, this has not always been the case. A comprehensive approach to assist least developed countries through a flexible implementation of existing instruments and through finding new mechanisms, is necessary. These include improvements in capital and investment flows and an increase in real terms of the official development assistance to least developed countries, particularly in Africa.

To this end, we call upon donor countries, international financial institutions and United Nations organs and specialized agencies to effectively participate in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the least developed countries for the 1990s, the mid-term review of which was held in September last year.

Similarly, my delegation welcomes the recently launched United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, for it brings a new impetus to the international community's awareness of the necessity to bring about a meaningful solution to African problems. Additional efforts should be made to prevent repetition of past experiences during the implementation of similar important initiatives, by ensuring a successful implementation of this one. The recent mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa has highlighted the positive changes made in the right direction during the last few years on the African continent. These trends should be supported and encouraged by the international community.

In this regard, my Government hopes that the report being prepared by a group of experts led by Ms. Graça Machel, in conformity with the General Assembly resolution 48/157 of 20 December 1993, will contribute significantly to drawing the international community's attention on the fate of children victimized by armed conflicts in the world, particularly, in Africa.

The current session of the General Assembly offers a unique opportunity for a collective review of the issue of conflict resolution in many parts of the world. With respect to Angola, the recent summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) organ on politics, defence and security has expressed concern over the slow progress and apparent stalemate in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. The summit expressed, *inter alia*, deep regret over the absence of the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) from the meeting and made a strong appeal to UNITA to fulfil its commitment within the deadline established by the Lusaka Protocol and those of Security Council resolution 864 (1993).

Mozambique, along with other SADC countries, is making its contribution to the smooth progress of this delicate process. The settlement of the conflict in Angola will contribute decisively to the materialization of strategic goals set forth by SADC and allow our region to embark on the process of regional integration and to dedicate our efforts to the well-being of our peoples.

Within the recently created Lusophone Community, or Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, we are also working hard to encourage the peace process in Angola. In doing so, we aim to consolidate the historic and cultural ties which unite the seven countries that have Portuguese as their official language, thus creating the necessary conditions for a more fruitful cooperation among them.

We are encouraged by the recent progress in Sierra Leone and Rwanda and look forward to a positive outcome of the crises in those countries. However, we remain concerned at the prevailing volatile situations in Burundi, Liberia and Somalia. We welcome all initiatives aimed at finding the needed political settlement of the crises in these African countries.

The recurrence of such long-lasting conflicts remains a serious challenge to the international community as a whole and also to the efforts within the framework of the recently established Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. My delegation wishes to commend all the countries that have lent their support to the functioning of the Mechanism, thus enabling Africans to take a much more active role in searching for solutions to the conflicts on their continent.

The recent outbreak of violence in the Middle East is a matter of grave concern to my delegation. This violence, if not averted urgently, will be a serious setback to the commendable progress made in the quest for a political settlement to the long-standing conflict in that region. We call upon all the parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint and to display the needed political maturity in the implementation of the mutually agreed commitments in the interest of all the peoples of the region. In this connection, we are encouraged by the dialogue initiated in the recent summit in Washington between the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of the Palestinian Authority with a view to putting an end to violence and resuming the peace process.

We have also followed the developments regarding the issue of East Timor. In making an assessment of the progress made so far, one cannot fail to register disappointment over the slow pace of talks between Indonesia and Portugal. Nevertheless, my delegation wishes to encourage both countries to assume their responsibilities with more vigour, with a view to finding a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to this issue, bearing in mind the need to allow the people of East Timor an opportunity to exercise their political rights, including the right to self-determination.

Time and again, virtually all Member States have emphasized the critical need to undertake reforms within the United Nations so as to ensure greater effectiveness in its work and to fulfil the sacrosanct principles enshrined in its Charter. The needed reforms within our Organization should not be regarded as an end in themselves. They should, *inter alia*, pave the way for the active and global participation of the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, in the work and procedures of the United Nations, including the Economic and Social Council, bearing in mind the shared responsibilities of these countries in the economic and social challenges facing today's world.

In this reform process, the strengthening of the United Nations system, which does not necessarily mean downsizing, is of paramount importance. The revitalization of the role of the Economic and Social Council is long overdue to allow better coordination and effective and efficient management of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. Reforms should also reflect the dynamics of international relations and the growing need for enhanced democracy, equitable geographic representation and the changes in the composition of its membership since the establishment of the United Nations 51 years ago. Above all, they should ensure the needed legitimacy, transparency and efficiency of its decisions.

In this connection, my delegation shares the frustrations expressed by a number of delegations regarding the lack of tangible progress within the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council. Since the beginning of its procedures, important and interesting ideas have been advanced in this regard. Therefore, nobody can deny the arguments calling for an expansion of that body. Lack of progress on the enlargement of the Security Council will only undermine the ability of the United Nations to discharge fully its obligations and limit the confidence of international public opinion on the future of our Organization. It is only by addressing the issue of enlargement and by each one's fulfilling its financial obligations that we can reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter and expect a well-functioning and dynamic United Nations ready to face the challenges of the next century. What is necessary is a genuine political will to change the status quo, which has favoured a limited number of Member States to the detriment of the legitimate interests of the vast majority of its membership.

In its 51 years of existence the United Nations, despite numerous difficulties during this period, has been able to achieve its crucial objective of halting the emergence of a third world war. Therefore, it must be allowed to continue to preserve the gains already achieved and draw lessons from mistakes of the past so as to ensure the feasibility of its mandate, as we approach the twenty-first century, in the maintenance of international peace and security, in monitoring the implementation of important decisions taken in the economic, social and environmental fields and in playing a more dynamic role in the quest for the development of our countries.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of India, His Excellency Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral.

Mr. Gujral (India): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Ambassador Razali on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. He is not present here, but I would like to say that he is no stranger to India. We are fully cognizant of his sagacity and skills and repose our confidence in his ability to successfully guide the General Assembly during its fifty-first session. May I also express my delegation's warm appreciation for the presidency of his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for a most productive tenure as President of the Assembly in its historic, landmark fiftieth year.

Six years ago I had the privilege of addressing the historic forty-fifth session of this Assembly. We rejoiced at the end of the cold war and believed that the animosities, rivalries, suspicions and intrigues that had bedeviled the past would now be overcome and the problems of the world and their solutions could be addressed with greater, perhaps pristine, clarity. We have welcomed the reduction of global tensions and the opening up of new economic possibilities between nations.

However, we cannot say that the new dawn has led to a new and genuinely cooperative web of kinship and collaboration. Regional conflicts and tensions continue to occupy us. Development problems remain acute, and there is less sensitivity to the genuine needs of struggling nations. The voice of the rich and powerful nations rings louder than ever, while the developing world feels itself more marginalized and ignored than ever.

In these circumstances, it is even more necessary to strive for a genuine spirit of joint international endeavour in addressing the world's problems. The United Nations is the foremost embodiment of multilateralism. No single nation or even group of nations today can expect to find solutions to the world's problems, nor are many problems amenable to solutions in isolation. Global problems require global institutions and global solutions. This role and duty can fall only to the United Nations.

We are concerned at unilateral actions and at the evident decline in the commitment to obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. International cooperation is necessary to meet the vast development needs of the developing countries, to eliminate weapons of mass destruction and to fight terrorism and crime. The United Nations system, under which sovereign nations have joined together to achieve their common objectives, is the universal framework for international cooperation. The Charter of the United Nations is the real basis for renewing multilateralism. India recently joined 15 other Heads of State or Government in stating that

> "either nations move forward to strengthen (multilateralism), or we risk having to face more unilateralism and perhaps conflict and overt disregard of international law and common values".

The United Nations is at a crossroads. Its financial crisis is the result of an unwarranted unwillingness on the part of certain countries to pay their dues in full and on time. Such deliberate targeting of the United Nations represents the most acute threat to multilateral cooperation and can do incalculable long-term damage.

Beyond the financial crisis of the United Nations itself is the critical issue of financing global cooperation. While the world remains confronted with enormous problems of poverty, malnutrition, disease, ecological degradation and waste, the will to contribute is on the decline. Development assistance is at its lowest level in decades. Negotiated replenishments of multilateral development funds are not being honoured.

It is unfortunate that voices continue to be raised questioning the role of the United Nations in the economic growth and social development of developing countries. It is necessary to restore to the United Nations, in the coming century, the important role of eradicating poverty and all the ills associated with it, of promoting development and achieving social progress and better living standards, with more freedom for all.

For this purpose, the multilateral economic system needs to be reformed and the partnership of the United Nations with other relevant institutions must to be strengthened in order to achieve greater economic growth, integration and sustainable development. The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions need to develop an effective partnership. While India welcomes the initial, tentative steps towards such a partnership, effective economic leadership requires that we work to ensure a much closer relationship between global economic institutions than has been the case so far. Indeed, there is no alternative if the financing of long-term global cooperation in economic and social fields is to be assured. We need larger volumes of financial assistance, greater predictability of resources and unfettered access to the markets of developed countries. It is also time that we energize our efforts to complete the Agenda for Development and launch an effective follow-up process, including in the context of the recent major United Nations conferences.

India is unreservedly committed to the protection and promotion of human rights. The profoundly humanistic traditions of Indian civilization, with its emphasis on tolerance, harmony, non-violence and the inviolability of the individual, have been consolidated in the Constitution of India, which is indeed a veritable bill of human rights. All human rights are sacrosanct in India, guaranteed by its Constitution, an independent judiciary, a free press, public opinion vigorously expressed and an independent National Human Rights Commission. To us in India, the human rights of all segments of society are sacrosanct and an article of faith rather than a policy.

We believe that international cooperation in the protection and promotion of human rights should proceed within the framework of respect for the sovereignty and integrity of States. We deplore the selective use of human rights issues as a form of political pressure, as an obstacle to trade or as a condition for development assistance. Such actions detract from the moral imperatives of human rights promotion and impede the full realization of the human rights of all people.

Human rights violations take many forms. Among the most pernicious of them is terrorism. Terrorism seeks to exploit the openness and freedom offered by democratic societies to pursue narrow ends through the use of violence. It must be combated by firm action at the national and international level. We are dismayed when we hear certain parties voice concern for the so-called rights of terrorists while ignoring their persistent violation of the human rights of their victims, including the right to life, freedom of expression and the freedom to follow religious beliefs of one's own choice.

India took the lead in raising the issue of terrorism as a threat to human rights almost five years ago. We are pleased that despite initial and sometimes vocal opposition by some western countries, terrorism is now accepted to be the major threat to the enjoyment of human rights today. A number of international declarations have been issued on terrorism such as the Sharm el-Sheikh Declaration, and the G-7 Lyons Declaration of 27 June 1996. We are encouraged that the international community now recognizes terrorism as a major challenge to democracy, human rights and peace. In this context, India will pursue its call to adopt a binding international convention to combat terrorism.

Fifty years after the United Nations was established, the threat to humanity posed by nuclear weapons continues unabated. We believe that India's security, as indeed that of all countries, lies in a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The only way to achieve this ultimate security is to ban the production, possession and use of nuclear weapons within an agreed time-frame. Partial and half-hearted arms control measures, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), defeat this objective by legitimizing the possession of nuclear weapons and permitting the non-explosive testing of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon countries. India, therefore, cannot be a party to such flawed arrangements.

Let me also emphasize that any effective disarmament regime needs to be universal in its approach and scope. The total elimination of all existing nuclear weapons, as an indispensable step towards general and complete disarmament under strict and efficient international control, is the demand of the entire Non-Aligned Movement, to which we fully subscribe. Partial or regional approaches, as are sometimes put forward, do not serve any useful purpose and can distract us from the accepted goal.

At the same time, India remains committed to participating fully and actively in any negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons and all types of tests, just as it did in regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

India signed and deposited its instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction two weeks ago. India regrets that major chemical weapon producers have been slow to ratify the Convention. We urge all those countries which have still not done so to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention and to demonstrate their readiness to move towards banning all weapons of mass destruction.

India will work with all like-minded countries in sponsoring draft resolutions on the establishment of an ad hoc committee under the Conference on Disarmament for beginning negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons in a time-bound framework. India expects all countries, including those represented in the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, which support time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons, to join in supporting such draft resolutions.

India will once again present the draft convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons at this session of the General Assembly. India believes that the urgency of negotiating that convention has been greatly enhanced by the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons.

At the recent session of the Conference on Disarmament, India joined 27 non-aligned and neutral countries to present a phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2020. India asks that all countries join us in propagating and promoting this joint proposal, both at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly and in other forums.

India is in favour of a non-discriminatory and universal ban on anti-personnel mines, which cripple or kill a large number of civilians.

The continued credibility of the United Nations requires reform of the Organization to reflect present-day realities. While the membership of the United Nations has increased greatly, the voices of the newly sovereign countries in decision-making in the United Nations remain unheard. There is an imbalance in the authority and weight of structures and organs, just as there is an imbalance in the weight of different countries or groups. The General Assembly, the sole universal organ of the United Nations, needs to find greater resonance in other bodies of the system.

The Security Council must be made more representative in order to enhance its legitimacy and effectiveness. The vast increase in the membership of the United Nations since its founding, especially of the developing countries, must find adequate representation in the categories of permanent and non-permanent membership. A comprehensive proposal by the Non-Aligned Movement for the reform and restructuring of the Security Council is already on the table. India supports the expansion of both the permanent and the non-permanent categories. We are against piecemeal or temporary solutions which discriminate against developing countries. We believe that the same yardstick must be applied to all countries, developed or developing, from all regions or groups, for induction as permanent members. We believe that under any objectively derived criteria for the expansion of permanent members, India would be an obvious candidate.

Reform and expansion must be an integral part of a common package. The restructuring of the Security Council must give expression to the impulse for reform. The reforms must address not only the failings of the past, but also the needs of the future.

Peacekeeping is a significant area of United Nations activities, very often the most visible symbol of the Organization's presence on the ground. India has participated in over 25 peacekeeping operations on four continents, including some of the most sensitive and prolonged, starting with Korea in 1953 and 1954, and including the operations in Viet Nam, Congo, the Middle East, Cambodia, Haiti, Somalia, El Salvador, Mozambique and Rwanda. Indian peacekeepers are currently in the field in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liberia and Kuwait. Our participation has not been without cost. We have lost 100 peacekeepers for the United Nations cause. We have also offered a fully-equipped brigade to the United Nations standby arrangement. The performance of the Indian troops has won universal recognition. India is one of the few countries which can sustain large-scale troop commitment over prolonged periods.

Our participation in United Nations peacekeeping does not stem from considerations of narrow gain. We have participated because we have been wanted and because we have been asked, but most of all because of our solidarity and empathy with the affected countries and with the international community, as well as because of our commitment to the United Nations and to the cause of international peace and security.

India has offered its candidature for the non-permanent seat on the Security Council from Asia for 1997 and 1998. Our candidature is rooted in the criteria stipulated in the Charter: the principle of equity, our unwavering commitment to the United Nations, and to the cause of multilateralism, and our 50-year-long contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes and principles of the Organization. India has a unique record of supporting United Nations activities against apartheid and colonialism. We have richly contributed to the debates on development, disarmament and human rights. We seek the onerous responsibility of Council membership convinced of the support of this Assembly.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay a warm tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his successful stewardship during a most difficult period. His services are a distinct asset to this world body.

Let me briefly refer to India's interaction with the world. We have witnessed some remarkable changes in the last few years. New vistas for greater cooperation are now visible. The challenge lies in effectively seizing the opportunities. We attach the highest importance to developing cordial and friendly relations with our neighbours with a view to promoting peace, stability and mutual confidence in the region. We also seek to develop stronger economic and commercial relations within the region, for all-around prosperity. As current Chairman of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), it will be our endeavour to promote multifaceted cooperation in all spheres.

The economic reforms embarked upon since 1991 have provided India with a new outward orientation that seeks greater integration of India into the global marketplace. Today, India is branching out and adding to the substantive content of its relations with individual countries of the region and beyond, developing and building upon regional cooperation arrangements involving SAARC, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC) and the Indian Ocean Rim, to name a few.

Convinced of the need and utility of enhanced South-South cooperation, we accord the highest priority to our relations with Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. We are proud to have been associated with Africa and its causes in the United Nations since the inception of the world body. We appreciate the role played by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which has striven to find regional solutions to African problems. Its efforts must be supplemented by the United Nations. The scramble for Africa in the nineteenth century was for African land and resources. We hope that the closing years of the present century will see a scramble to redress African problems, the genesis of which largely lies outside the region. The United Nations must lead international efforts to meet Africa's needs and aspirations.

We are deeply concerned at the recent serious incidents of violence in the West Bank and Gaza and by Israeli authorities' opening of a tunnel beneath Haram Al-Sharif — the Temple Mount — in East Jerusalem, which resulted in the tragic loss of several innocent lives and large-scale injuries following violent clashes. The current situation underlines the need for immediate and effective measures to end the violence and to create a climate that would enable purposeful negotiations based on a recognition of the underlying causes of the conflict. These developments also serve to emphasize the need to build further on the agreements and understandings already reached.

In the wave of the recent political changes in the Middle East, India is encouraged by the reiteration by all parties of their continued commitment to the Middle East peace process based on the framework established by the Madrid Conference. However, we are concerned that these reaffirmations do not appear to have manifested themselves in commensurate progress in the peace process. India urges all parties to intensify their efforts towards realizing the mutually agreed objectives of the Middle East peace process, keeping in view that achieving durable peace and stability in the Middle East requires solving the Palestinian issue.

India has ties dating back to early history with Afghanistan, a country with which we also share bonds of kinship, culture and religion. We are deeply saddened by the continued violence and loss of life in that country. India stands for the unity, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. We urge all Afghan parties to resolve their differences through early peaceful dialogue and negotiations. We support the efforts of the Secretary-General and his special representative to bring about a solution in Afghanistan.

The Non-Aligned Movement figures firmly in India's world view and constitutes an important plank in our foreign policy. We remain firmly committed to the philosophy and values of the Non-Aligned Movement. For us, non-alignment means independence of thought and autonomy of choice. It also means working in cooperation with the largest number of countries. Last year's non-aligned summit in Colombia reinforced our faith in the ability and resilience of the Movement, its responsiveness to change and its effectiveness in today's global situation. India will be privileged to host the next ministerial conference of the non-aligned countries in New Delhi in 1997.

India is a progressive country charting a balanced course between economic growth and social justice, and science and tradition. It is committed to the values of peace, non-violence, coexistence, pluralism, tolerance and constructive cooperation. Culturally, India is a bridge between traditional cultures and emergent trends. Politically, India will remain anchored in a pluralistic, liberal democracy that can provide space for all its constituents and internal interlocutors.

Before I conclude, I am reminded of an ancient Rig Vedic hymn which reads:

> "O citizens of the world!
> Live in harmony and concord
> Be organized and cooperative
> Speak with one voice
> And make your resolutions with one Mind."

May this invocation to harmony, cooperation, consensus and solidarity continue to guide our deliberations and actions.

Address by The Honourable Denzil L. Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The Honourable Denzil L. Douglas, Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, His Excellency Mr. Denzil Douglas, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Douglas (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I should like to begin my presentation by congratulating Mr. Razali Ismail on his election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. It bears testimony to this Organization's confidence in and high regard for his skills and abilities. Also, I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Freitas do Amaral for the efficient manner in which he presided over the fiftieth anniversary session of the United Nations.

At last year's session, I spoke of the faith of the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis in the United Nations as the only global Organization able to balance the interests of the weak against those of the strong. I spoke also of the need for individual countries to work to develop approaches to collective problem-solving and partnership. Saint Kitts and Nevis reiterates this faith, which, I believe, is amply justified.

Very recently the United Nations came to the assistance of my country and made available support and resources to aid the process of constitutional reform, which, hopefully, will avert further fragmentation and preserve the integrity of Saint Kitts and Nevis. I should like sincerely to record my thanks to the Secretary-General for this kind gesture.

I said previously that my Government does not ask for hand-outs. We do not expect charity. Our participation in this forum is the result of our commitment to multilateralism. All we ask for is genuine partnership, opportunity and an environment in which we all can prosper.

My party, while in opposition, developed an action plan for the progressive growth of the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis. Today, as the duly elected Government, we have readily realized that the problems facing small developing States keep increasing. But this has not diminished our resolve. One year ago, my Government began the difficult and trying task of implementing our policies and devising new strategies to address the stubborn problems facing my country. We recognize that the coexistence in any society of the threat of narco-trafficking, youth unemployment and poverty is a recipe for social chaos. We in Saint Kitts and Nevis are therefore committed to ensuring that the young people inherit a legacy of hope and live in an environment in which dreams are not only kept alive but are realized.

We fully appreciate that the challenges ahead are great, but we also see great possibilities, and we are determined to embrace the opportunities. However, to move our people forward we will require partnership; we cannot do it alone.

To this end, I welcome with enthusiasm the statement last week by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom. I am encouraged by his intervention because it speaks to the fundamental issues that we in small States have for so long worked to bring to the top of the international agenda.

Last year I appealed to Member States to commit to a genuine partnership between the developed and the developing worlds. The developing world — small States in particular — have for far too long been languishing on the periphery of international affairs and are often corralled into the mainstream only when issues of votes or candidatures are at the centre of debates and individual national policies.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom spoke of the need for the developed world to pursue policies that will allow the economies of developing countries to expand through export-led growth and the abolition of barriers to trade in the developed world. I fully support this call. My delegation would like to see the Bretton Woods institutions come to the aid of small States by creating adequate structures to allow these States to develop economically and participate better in the world system. There must be a period of transition to encourage small States to integrate into the mainstream of international interaction.

We all share a common responsibility to ensure that developing countries are more equitably integrated into the world economic system. We must break the insidious cycle of dependency and replace it with bonds of partnership and cooperation. We are our brothers' keepers. This must be given priority in our national and international policies.

The developed world must avoid outmoded perceptions that suggest that it is best qualified to prescribe strategies for growth in developing countries. Attention will also have to be paid to indigenous priorities in developing countries. I say to the Assembly that there can be no prescription without consultation. Attempts at development without recognizing the peculiar problems of small States and the responsibilities of the developed world will not promote sustainable growth.

We speak repeatedly of hope, and the promise of the new millennium, yet sometimes overlook many of the problems plaguing us today. My Government looks to this new era with great optimism and unbridled hope that we can achieve sustainable development, that sustainable human growth can be realized, and that our people can afford to dream of a life beyond the expectations of their forebears.

However, I fear for our children's dreams in a world where the products of developing countries are discriminated against and dubious tariffs make our goods seem uncompetitive. I see definite cause for concern when friendly countries that are fully cognizant of the need for the limited preferential access our region enjoys, pursue policies inimical to the development and growth of our countries. This strategy is not free trade. I fear for the progress of my people when development is measured in cold statistical terms that ignore social transformation and sustainable development.

I fear for the future of my children if small, vulnerable States such as my own are continuously graduated out of aid-recipient-country status simply because the gross national product per capita is considered high. This policy does not take into account our high per capita cost of infrastructure development; it does not take into account the frequency of hurricanes and other natural disasters, or the diseconomy of scale faced by our small enterprises.

I fear for my brothers and sisters in the Windward Islands, whose very livelihood is threatened and could be seriously undermined by the disputes over Windward Island banana exports. If the economies of the Windward Islands are affected, my country, too, will suffer. Our economies are very closely linked. We share a common currency, a common central bank and, of course, a common future.

It seems that the international community would readily punish growth. Whenever small States experience relative growth, instead of lending further assistance to ensure that they emerge from the quagmire of deepening poverty, necessary resources and support systems are taken away, and these countries find themselves being graduated out of concessional assistance programmes. This is wrong. This is inhumane. When we rob a man of the means to feed and educate himself and his family, how can we expect him to contribute productively to civil society? This is a world of people, and its organization must be about people. Their needs should not become secondary to systems, policies and experiments. Structures should be used to further the goals and aspirations of our peoples despite differences in economies, populations and size. Our peoples all share a common dream: the dream of freedom to chart their own destinies; the dream of self-reliance; the dream of a better standard of living.

On the question of the environment, it is inconceivable that the very countries that agree to contribute to coastal erosion management and fund studies on environmental protection would wish to trans-ship hazardous toxic waste through our waterways. The fragility of my region's ecosystems, the openness of the economies, the overwhelming reliance on food imports, and the susceptibility of the tourism product put us precariously, and, perhaps, uniquely, at the mercy of external forces.

Saint Kitts and Nevis intends to preserve the standard of living we have achieved and to ensure a prosperous future for all of our peoples. My Government strongly urges the international community to respect our determination to make the Caribbean a nuclear-free zone and to keep it free from toxic pollutants. The region already suffers from the consequences of rising sea levels, coastal erosion and the destructive effects of natural disasters. The catalogue is very long; we cannot add further problems to it.

Small island developing States require committed, long-term assistance in environmental protection. I am convinced that sustainable development and environmental preservation are inexorably linked. We cannot make token gestures of support on one level only to undermine support on another. We need to enforce existing international instruments, promote cooperation and allow the United Nations to play a more central and coordinating role in developing appropriate machinery for bringing together political will and financial and technological resources to guarantee results.

I call on the United Nations to devise a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing sustainable development. Additionally, I urge developing countries to work more closely together to develop indigenous strategies and innovative approaches in order to solve the problems of development.

The plethora of issues which come before the United Nations are critical. Therefore, it is necessary that the United Nations undergo substantive reform that will address resource distribution and the implementation of recommendations. We must be careful not to address reform in a superficial way. We have to commit ourselves to reforms which allow the Organization to respond more effectively to the problems which face Member States.

It is our collective responsibility to restore and strengthen the international agenda of the United Nations and support its role and performance in the social, institutional and economic fields. I believe that the Organization can help to fuse our individual and collective goals. However, Member countries must believe in the international relevance of this Organization.

It is important for us to promote consensus in addressing the important questions of budgetary and administrative reform of this, our Organization.

Irrespective of national ambitions, irrespective of size or resources, the United Nations is the only global institution whose membership gives it the mandate to examine the vast array of problems that affect the entire community of nations.

The work being undertaken to reform the United Nations should be structured in such a way as to eliminate unnecessary wastage and bureaucratic inefficiency. At the same time, we should not use the problems as an excuse to diminish our commitment to the strengthening and re-energizing of the United Nations.

When we look at international affairs, democracy is still one of our most sacred aspirations. But it needs tangible institutional and infrastructural support. My Government welcomes the extension of the United Nations mission in Haiti which we believe is crucial to consolidating and furthering the cause of democracy and human resource development in Haiti. We should not expect to strengthen democracy in Haiti without addressing the systemic causes of poverty, illiteracy and violence and the absence of democratic institutions. The people of Haiti will eventually inherit the rewards of peace when commitment to long-term social, political and economic development is assured. It is unwise for States to use politics and partisanship to impede progress in Haiti. Its people long for an opportunity to become masters of their own fate, and they should be given that chance to pursue their national aspirations.

My delegation welcomes the prospects for peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the progress towards implementing the recommendations of the Dayton Accords. We welcome the willingness of the parties to develop democratic institutions, enhance human rights and see to the return and settlement of displaced persons. The situation in this region is still quite fragile. We must continue to struggle for peace, and people must be made to believe that such atrocities will never, ever happen again.

The situation in the Middle East has regrettably taken a turn for the worse. I appeal to the region's Governments to recommit themselves to peace, the only viable option for attaining coexistence, security, stability and genuine progress for all parties concerned. We further urge the Governments to continue to respect the agreements reached and to commit to their implementation. The successes of past years should never be squandered.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis lends its support to the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and commends the work of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity in attempting to resolve these challenging and often thorny issues. We also urge all factions in Burundi to give negotiations a fighting chance. Violence breeds violence, but peace gives birth to partnership. Peace gives birth to growth and to economic development.

We have circulated a document which reflects our policy regarding Taiwan. Our policy is to respect the territorial integrity of all countries and to refrain from interference in the internal affairs of all Member States. Because of our traditional relationship with the 21.3 million people on Taiwan, we have come to respect their economic stability and progress. Their growing democracy and their contribution to the developing world have not gone unnoticed.

We believe they have an important and continuing role to play in international development strategies. We are confident that whatever difficulties exist between the Chinese people separated by the Taiwan Strait can be resolved by the Chinese people themselves and in a spirit of fraternity and good will. We urge the international community to be ready, if necessary, to provide the mechanisms to facilitate dialogue and cooperation. Resolution of the stalemate would significantly contribute to the cause of development worldwide and to peace and security in the region.

We look forward to the implementation of the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. My Government believes that this is a significant step and a triumph for all women worldwide. It will allow them to achieve full equality of opportunity and equitable integration into the mainstream of decision-making and the development process.

We should bear in mind when discussing the question of human rights that we commit a fundamental error by selectively disregarding the right to economic survival and social well-being. When we single out human rights and freedom we do grave injustice to those people languishing below the poverty line, unable to determine the course of their own lives.

Fundamental to achieving tangible results is the necessity of adopting a comprehensive and wholesome approach to human rights. It is not nearly enough to ensure political suffrage and freedom of expression, although these are extremely important, without establishing mechanisms to foster social self-reliance and economic independence. To promote human rights in the wider sense is to complement and consolidate a democratic culture within any given society.

Human rights protection also means protecting the rights of children against hunger, against mental and physical abuse, against prostitution, against trafficking in children and against pornography. Therefore, we must attack the ills of poverty, illiteracy and deprivation and enact punitive legislation. We support the first international conference on the sexual exploitation of minors, held in Stockholm, as a significant step and an important initiative to raise awareness and develop strategies.

In conclusion, I challenge the international community to give effect to promises with solutions and tangible results. If we fail to design appropriate strategies today to address present problems, we are doomed to repeat past mistakes.

The time for action is overdue. Please, we can wait no longer and we must delay no longer.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Denzil L. Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakstan, His Excellency Mr. Kassymjomart Tokaev.

Mr. Tokaev (Kazakstan): I wish to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on his election to his high office. I would like to express my confidence that he will accomplish his important mission honourably.

There is no doubt that the fifty-first session of the General Assembly will go down in the history of mankind as an important milestone on the world community's road to global peace and security. One of the most important diplomatic documents of our century, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, has been opened for signing.

On that occasion the President of Kazakstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, made a special statement, which has been circulated as an official United Nations document. The people of Kazakstan, having fully experienced the destructive power of nuclear weapons, resolutely voted to end the testing of these lethal weapons. In 1991 the President of Kazakstan, expressing the wish of his people, made a decision to shut down the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. Thus, Kazakstan had already taken decisive measures to ban nuclear testing five years ago.

Kazakstan is consistent in its policy of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Recently, we completed the dismantling of the nuclear infrastructure on the territory of Kazakstan, thereby eliminating the capability that was, until recently, the fourth largest in the world.

That is why, when giving their due to all the countries which have trod the thorny path of preparing this Treaty, I believe it is necessary to recognize my country's significant contribution to this extremely important cause.

However, considerable progress in disarmament does not, regrettably, guarantee the stability of the present world order. We still witness some negative impulses destroying the basis of the relationship between the States which united more than half a century ago. We have to admit that with the disappearance of a bipolar world, our planet has not become safer. On the contrary, the potential for global conflict has increased considerably increased. That is why the issue of reforming the United Nations, so that our common Organization can adequately respond to conflicting realities of international relations at this juncture, is becoming ever so urgent.

Reforms are an indispensable element of any system's development. They are even more important in the case of such a universal forum as the United Nations. In his speech at the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly, the President of Kazakstan underscored the important need to increase the world community's efforts to elaborate a conceptual model of a renewed United Nations. It involves new objectives, tasks and functions of the United Nations of the next century.

The United Nations, being a genuinely universal Organization, requires a special approach. It is important to keep in mind that the United Nations is our common home. We cannot count on hotels in case of emergency. That is why United Nations reforms should be approached from rational positions. We want the United Nations to keep up with the times and to tap the potential for self-improvement and elimination of the vestiges of the past. We want the United Nations structure to be more effective and flexible in dealing with the problems threatening peace and security. Supporting the desire of Japan and Germany to become permanent members of the Security Council, Kazakstan is in favour of an expansion of the Council's non-permanent membership on the basis of an equitable and balanced representation of all regions. All other proposals should also be taken into consideration.

Criticism of the United Nations can hardly be a reason for doubting its ability to function and for shifting all the blame onto the Secretary-General. I am sure that we have not yet fully mobilized the creative potential of the United Nations. This applies first of all to the Charter. We should carefully reread it, taking into consideration today's world order, not to drastically revise, it but to find additional opportunities hidden in this truly comprehensive document. It is our opinion that despite the piles of studies on the legal framework of the United Nations, the Charter itself contains enormous unexplored potential for the renewal of the United Nations. Until the United Nations mobilizes these dormant capabilities it will create the impression of a dormant Organization unable to respond to the challenges of today.

We have to take a closer look at those provisions of the Charter that deal with cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, or, speaking the language of the Charter, with regional arrangements and agencies. This kind of interaction would be extremely effective for the development of an early warning system and preventive diplomacy. Besides, active cooperation with regional organizations would be beneficial when dealing with economic problems.

I would like to recall President Nursultan Nazarbaev's proposal to include in the agenda of a future session of the General Assembly an item entitled "United Nations reforms — an adequate response to the challenges of the twenty-first century".

One does not have to elaborate on the need to ensure stability and security in the Central Asia region. Kazakstan, as a strategically important State in this region, makes every effort to guarantee tranquillity in Central Asia.

However, the situation in the region defies straightforward assessment. There are zones of tranquillity, including Kazakstan, but there are also zones of conflict. One matter of great concern is the situation in Afghanistan. Further escalation of the conflict in Afghanistan could have negative effects on the situation in Central Asia. We are grateful to the Security Council for paying attention to the situation in that country. There is no doubt that the Security Council statement of 28 September 1996 is important for the resolution of the situation there. At the same time, we urge the Security Council to take up this item again in order to elaborate measures to stop the conflict.

The situation in Central Asia underscores the need for greater interaction between the region and the United Nations. Such interaction would cause Central Asia to become more involved in international cooperation. Central Asia could undoubtedly contribute to the establishment of a safer world order.

In this regard, we pin great hopes on the establishment by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) of a joint commission for Central Asia. We appreciate the positive United Nations reaction to this initiative of our Head of State.

Kazakstan wants to join the World Trade Organization as soon as possible and is taking concrete steps in this direction.

We are grateful to the United Nations for its support of Kazakstan's proposal concerning the resolution on transit environment in the landlocked States of Central Asia.

We are also pleased at the positive reaction of the United Nations to the initiative of the leaders of the three Central Asian States concerning the formation of a Central Asian peacekeeping battalion. I would like to take this opportunity to state that the Central Asian peacekeeping battalion will be committed to the United Nations Charter and will serve the ideals and purposes of our Organization.

Four years ago, speaking at the United Nations, the President of Kazakstan pointed out the necessity of convening a conference on interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia. It is with deep satisfaction that we can report that our quest for peace and security on the Asian continent is being supported by an ever increasing number of States. Experts are at work on a permanent basis. A conference on Asian security took place at the level of Deputy Foreign Ministers. We are especially grateful to the United Nations for its assistance in the implementation of the initiative of our Head of State. Kazakstan regards the convocation of this conference on interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia as its contribution to United Nations global peacekeeping efforts.

Kazakstan fully supports the peace-making activities of the United Nations in different parts of the world. We have no doubt that the United Nations should play a priority role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Our common task is to prevent United Nations peace-making functions from being delegated to any other organizations. The diminished peace-making potential of the United Nations is not its fault, but its misfortune.

Kazakstan believes that United Nations peace-making activities could be rendered more effective through a more precise formulation and strengthening of the missions' mandates. They could thereby make a significant contribution to the resolution of crisis situations.

When we talk about international issues we cannot ignore a trend as alarming as the growth of secessionism. This phenomenon has become one of the major causes of crisis situations in the world, particularly in the post-Soviet context. We think that the United Nations must pay close attention to the destructive consequences of aggressive secessionism. The time has come to put an end to the absolute right of nations to self-determination. Basically, the world has already realized the right to self-determination; further continuation of this process will create new trouble spots and lead to more bloodshed. The current world order should rest on the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. If we really care about the stability of the current world order we must firmly reject any manifestation of secessionism. Our highest values should be the peace, well-being and happiness of peoples, and we can achieve these goals not by instigating peoples to self-determination but by creating appropriate conditions for the sustainable economic development of all nations.

From this lofty rostrum it is impossible to ignore another problem that brings great pain to humankind, a pain which our country feels especially acutely. I am referring to environmental disasters. There may be no other place in the world where such vast territories are affected by the consequences of these disasters. Indeed, more than half of Kazakstan's territory could be declared an environmental disaster area. However, it is not only a matter of territories, but people who are still suffering. The Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and the Aral Sea have become disaster areas of global dimensions. Furthermore, we should not forget that Kazakstan has been the site of chemical and biological weapons tests.

All these problems require priority attention from the United Nations. During economic transition, even large States cannot cope alone with environmental problems of such magnitude. It is also important to remember that it is innocent people who suffer, not the ones who created or tested these lethal weapons. They are the victims of the arms race between the two opposing systems, victims of the totalitarian thinking of the cold war period. They have every right to demand the attention of international organizations and donor countries.

We cannot say that the United Nations has been indifferent to the consequences of the environmental disasters in Kazakstan. But, at the same time, we cannot claim that the victims of these environmental disasters have felt practical results of the activities of international missions. We are grateful to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank for the elaboration of large-scale programmes for the rehabilitation of the Aral Sea zone. At the same time, we are looking forward to a more active execution of these programmes. Meanwhile, the situation in this region, as well as in other environmental disaster areas, remains extremely serious.

Kazakstan welcomes and supports the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly to convene a special session on environment and sustainable development in the middle of next year. We hope that this forum will adopt meaningful decisions on environmental problems that also affect our country.

This century, which has witnessed two world wars, the collapse of the colonial system and the disintegration of the socialist system, has begun a new phase. This phase has new dimensions, both geo-political and geo-economic.

In politics, a trend towards the globalization of international problems has been apparent. With the end of the cold war, the problems of nuclear non-proliferation have not been solved. The problem of environmental security has acquired global dimensions. The globalization of communications has triggered illegal trafficking in weapons, drugs and money of giant proportions. A new information realm has been formed in which national borders have become merely symbolic.

Previously unknown methods of production have emerged, increasingly referred to as "computer civilization". Scientific research and technological factors have grown in importance as never before. New technologies have become the hottest items in world markets. The role of a State in world economic ties is changing; it is no longer the dominant institute. International institutes function as independent international economic entities.

It is with this list of problems, which is far from being complete, that we are entering the next century. We have yet to sort them out and find optimal ways to adapt to new realities which will be facing us in the twenty-first century. We have to admit that humankind, creating these problems through its activities, still cannot find adequate ways to solve them.

That is why we turn to the United Nations. Our common home is becoming a quintessence of the human mind. We have to help the United Nations reach a new level in dealing with global trends. A renewed Organization, promptly reacting to the challenges of today, will not only enrich itself but will also give us a sense of confidence on the eve of the next century.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Lieutenant-General Mompati S. Merafhe, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Botswana.

Mr. Merafhe (Botswana): I am delighted to extend to the President and his country, Malaysia, the sincere congratulations of the Government and the people of Botswana on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. His record as an accomplished diplomat has the admiration of my delegation. He can therefore count on the full support and cooperation of the delegation of Botswana in the discharge of his demanding responsibilities.

We salute his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his successful stewardship of the fiftieth session and the Special Commemorative Meeting.

The last five years have been the most momentous in the history of the United Nations, imposing on the world body enormous responsibilities, which the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and the Secretariat have carried out with a deep sense of commitment and dedication. We assure them that they continue to enjoy the confidence and full support of Botswana in the execution of their duties.

The African continent continues to make commendable progress in the consolidation of freedom and democracy. This year the continent witnessed the successful holding of multi-party elections in Benin, Sierra Leone and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The right of citizens to organize themselves and participate freely in the political processes of their countries, and respect for human rights, form the basis for stability, democracy and development.

Indeed, the continent has increasingly embraced these universal values, which are an integral part of a democratic culture. Not only has Africa embraced political pluralism, accountability and good governance, it has also demonstrated its readiness to defend these principles.

A year ago we expected that the people of Angola would by now have started a new chapter of peace in the history of their country. It is regrettable that to date the way forward remains unclear. We strongly call upon those who have contributed to the current stalemate in Angola to see reason and show more commitment to the peace process. Two days ago the Heads of State and Government of southern Africa met in Luanda, Angola, in an effort to persuade all concerned to ensure the speedy implementation of the Lusaka Protocol.

We are deeply concerned about the situation in Burundi. The country is wallowing in a quagmire of self-destruction. No amount of reasoning and persuasion has thus far succeeded in drawing the political leaders in Burundi away from a path of mutual annihilation and to the path of accommodation and reconciliation.

We salute the efforts of the regional leaders and of the international community aimed at ensuring the restoration of democracy and constitutional order in Burundi. That sister country deserves some reprieve from the traumatic experience it has recently gone through. Burundi needs peace and stability now, not tomorrow.

While the situation in Rwanda remains tense, there are some encouraging signs that the country is making steady progress towards normalcy. Preparations for next year's general elections seem to be well under way.

We urge the international community to spare no effort in encouraging that country towards national reconciliation. Key among the necessary measures to be undertaken is the safe return of refugees to their homeland.

Despite all efforts by the international community, and by West Africa in particular, the political crisis in Liberia has so far eluded solution. We call upon all the parties concerned to ensure that elections are held in May 1997 as scheduled.

In our view, and in reality, Western Sahara poses a major political and moral problem. Botswana is committed to the holding of a free, fair and impartial referendum for the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with the Settlement Plan. We are deeply concerned that the identification process has been in a state of paralysis for several months now.

Somalia continues to haunt the conscience of the world. The situation in that country is a tragic demonstration of how a disparate assortment of gunmen can hijack and destroy a nation. The United Nations should not consider Somalia a lost cause. We should therefore persevere in the search for a comprehensive settlement to the political crisis in that country.

Recent developments in the Middle East are a matter of profound concern to Botswana. Starting in September 1993 we were pleased to witness the dramatic unfolding of a promising peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, on the one hand, and between Israel and Jordan, on the other. We looked forward to the resumption of negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours, Syria and Lebanon, which, hopefully, would have ushered in a lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East.

Recent events in the occupied Arab territories are a stark indicator of what can happen to the peace process if things are allowed to drag on and on. We appeal to the Government of Israel to fulfil its obligations under the agreements it signed with the Palestinians.

Developments on the Korean peninsula have also been a matter of grave concern. Botswana is committed to the peaceful reunification of Korea.

Botswana follows developments in Cyprus with keen interest. The continued division of Cyprus is a serious violation of the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of a Member State of the United Nations.

Land-mines, particularly anti-personnel land-mines, are a major threat to humanity. Botswana strongly believes that the solution to the menace of anti-personnel land-mines lies in a total ban on production, stockpiling, export and use. Existing protocols have provided only a partial solution to this problem. There is a glaring need for a binding international legal instrument for the progressive and ultimate elimination of these weapons.

The production, stockpiling and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, of which nuclear weapons are the most lethal, is also a matter of deep concern to my delegation. For far too long, non-nuclear-weapon States have been calling for an international legal instrument to safeguard them against the threat or use of these weapons. The response of the nuclear Powers has been less than reassuring, to say the least. Unilateral statements on security assurances, which have been transmitted through a Security Council resolution, do not meet the demands of the overwhelming majority of the membership of this Organization.

The security of non-nuclear-weapon States from the threat or use of these dangerous weapons can only be guaranteed by the institution of a legally binding international instrument. Botswana is committed to the early conclusion of such an instrument, and we hope that the nuclear-weapon States will demonstrate the necessary commitment to meet the concerns of non-nuclear-weapon States.

Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons commits parties, *inter alia*, to reach agreement

> "on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control".

Unfortunately, the nuclear-weapon States are resolutely opposed to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Not only are these States resistant to this noble ideal, but they continue to develop new types of weapons. What conclusions are we expected to draw from this state of affairs?

It is difficult for nuclear-weapon States to claim the moral high ground to dissuade any State from acquiring the same weapons for the defence of its supreme national interests, while they themselves consider such weapons a reliable means of self-defence. Nuclear-weapon States should accept their responsibility to enter into and conclude negotiations for the elimination of these weapons.

The General Assembly has repeatedly called upon the Conference on Disarmament to accelerate consideration of the question of the expansion of its membership. We thus call upon the Conference on Disarmament to address speedily the question of its expansion to the satisfaction of the general membership of the United Nations.

Five years have passed since the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s was adopted by the General Assembly. While we all applauded the adoption of the New Agenda, it has to be accepted that the necessary operational framework was never put in place to ensure effective mobilization and disbursement of the target resources.

Concerned about the poor performance of the United Nations New Agenda, in March this year the Secretary-General launched the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, which has the backing of the World Bank, among others. The Initiative envisages an expenditure of some $25 billion over a 10-year period to address identified sectoral development priorities. This is a laudable Initiative which should afford Africa the opportunity to address effectively the critical nexus of food security, population and the environment.

For their part, most African countries have met their obligations as spelled out in national structural adjustment programmes, in addition to the efforts made in the fields of democracy, human rights and good governance. Although southern Africa today enjoys relative peace and stability, it will continue to need special assistance in order to address the problems of reconstruction and development of the economic, physical and social infrastructures which were destroyed or adversely affected by many years of war and racial injustice. We have no doubt that the international community will complement our efforts so that we can launch our region on a firm road to regional integration and economic development.

Botswana is a strong proponent of the reform and restructuring of the United Nations. My President, who is a member of the Secretary-General's United Nations Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development, firmly believes in a more action-oriented and streamlined United Nations system that is able to deliver. But we do not agree with those who advocate a "cut-cut" approach. There could be areas where additional staff could be the catalyst to enhanced effectiveness and efficiency. What the world needs is a United Nations that has the capacity to implement its programmes and projects effectively and efficiently, a United Nations that can put to better use the human and material resources at its disposal and one that can better guarantee international peace and security and promote international understanding.

It should be noted that the responsibility for the reform process, to a large extent, lies squarely with Member States and not with the Secretary-General, although he has a contribution to make in the whole process. Member States should therefore take full responsibility for their inability to reach agreement on various aspects of the reform process and desist from seeking scapegoats for their failure to reach consensus on a multifaceted international and structural reform of the Organization.

Botswana and other countries in southern Africa have not been spared the scourge of illicit drug trafficking and consumption. The Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community recently signed, among other instruments, a protocol on illicit drug trafficking. The aim is to pool our resources — such as police forces, customs authorities and drug enforcement agencies — to fight drug trafficking and other cross-border crimes effectively. We look forward to continued international cooperation in this regard. We are hopeful that these efforts will be crowned with success and will receive the full support and cooperation of the international community.

The human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome pandemic is another scourge of our time and a serious threat to humanity. The socio-economic consequences of the disease are a matter of grave concern, and the international community should make concerted efforts to address this human tragedy — which affects the young and the productive sectors of our societies in particular — before it is too late.

To conclude, my delegation reaffirms its total confidence in the stewardship of the President of the General Assembly and pledges its loyalty and cooperation. We reaffirm our commitment to work with other delegations towards the strengthening of the United Nations. We reaffirm our confidence in the manner in which the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, manages the affairs of our Organization. We salute him for his visionary leadership and untiring commitment to duty.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.23

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

Official Records

23rd plenary meeting

Friday, 4 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail .... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call on the Chairman of the delegation of Zambia, Mr. Peter Kasanda.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to warmly congratulate you on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first regular session. Your election is a tribute not only to your country, Malaysia, but also to you personally. I am aware that you bring to the presidency of the General Assembly wide experience in the field of international relations, from which we stand to benefit immensely. I would also like to wish you every success in your important duties. I would further like to affirm the readiness of my delegation to cooperate with you in the discharge of your duties.

Allow me also to pay tribute to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who presided over the fiftieth regular session of the General Assembly with great skill and dedication. His presidency did indeed enhance the deliberative role of the General Assembly.

Furthermore, my delegation would like to record its appreciation for the work of our esteemed Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, carried out under trying conditions. Zambia greatly values the contribution of the Secretary-General to the reform process of the United Nations and can only hope that the entire membership will give him a second term in order for him to complete these reforms.

This session of the General Assembly is distinctive because it is being held in the aftermath of the historic fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, which we observed last year. It will be recalled that in observing and celebrating that important event, we made solemn commitments to steer the world body towards the progressive development of a world community that would be cooperating effectively in dealing with global problems in the interest of humanity. We also agreed that the United Nations should be more democratic, transparent and responsive and should be the common property of all the people of the world, in whose name it was created in the first place. We went on to state that we wanted all citizens of the world to have real ownership of the Organization. We also set for ourselves economic and social goals. In some cases, we went as far as to agree on specific time-bound targets by which progress would be measured. This session, therefore, marks the beginning of a process of fulfilling these solemn commitments that we made last year.

Crucial to fulfilling these commitments is the issue of the reform of the United Nations, which is now under way. Reform and continuous renewal are indispensable if the future of the Organization is to be secured. All of us have to play our part with the hope and determination necessary to carry forward the United Nations reform

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

agenda with speed and thoroughness. In this way, we can work towards strengthening the Organization and make it serve humanity more effectively. It is my conviction that the United Nations can achieve greater success if we, the stakeholders, work towards creating a much improved Organization.

As the twenty-first century approaches, the greatest challenge facing the international community is to improve the living conditions of the majority of people. Every human being must have access to opportunities that afford a decent livelihood under conditions that are free from want, disease, hunger and ignorance. The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen last year adopted a framework to deal with poverty and other social problems. Far too many people, especially women and children, are vulnerable to marginalization and deprivation. We need to invest more resources to end the conditions of endemic human deprivation existing in many parts of the world today.

There are several other areas where we need to improve the social conditions of life. The first ever World Congress on the Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm, Sweden, in August this year, presented in graphic detail the atrocities being committed against children. Many young lives are being wasted in the huge, illegal international business of child prostitution and pornography. As a civilized world, we cannot allow lifestyles that are attuned to the sexual abuse of children. It is the hope of my delegation that all countries of the world will work expeditiously to implement the Agenda for Action adopted at the World Congress. In the same vein, the international community must continue to protect and promote the rights of the child by implementing the provisions of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Children.

The United Nations has also articulated various programmes aimed at the improvement of the status of women and youth. Commitments contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, require the devoted attention of the international community, especially with regard to empowerment strategies in the critical areas of employment, education, health and participation in societal decision-making. It is incumbent upon us all to honour the commitments we made in the declarations and the programmes of action. My country has committed itself to the attainment of the objectives contained in these documents. Women and children are invaluable resources that can be neglected only at the world's own peril.

It is fitting that we begin this session shortly after the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Zambia supported the adoption of this Treaty because of our commitment to general and complete disarmament under effective international control. It is in the same spirit that my country signed the Pelindaba Treaty, establishing Africa as a nuclear-free zone, on 11 April this year. Zambia will be signing the CTBT with the hope that all other countries of the world will do so as well, in the spirit of the traditional recognition by the United Nations that disarmament is one of the priority questions of international relations. In this regard, Zambia would like to call on nuclear-weapon States to inject a new spirit of commitment to ensuring nuclear disarmament, in accordance with article 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In this connection, my delegation wishes to reiterate the conviction that the time has indeed come for the convening of another special session of the General Assembly, in 1999, devoted to disarmament. My delegation believes that such a session would offer additional possibilities for the international community to review, from a perspective more in tune with the current international situation, the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament in the post-cold-war era.

It is common knowledge that in most of today's conflicts the most widely used weapons are small arms and light weapons. None is more menacing than land-mines, the use of which is widespread. Currently more than 110 million of them are buried in various parts of the world, mostly in developing countries. The world cannot continue to lose human lives from these lethal weapons. In this regard, my delegation fully supports calls for the banning at the global level of the use, stockpiling, production and sale of anti-personnel land-mines for all time. Zambia will therefore support initiatives, during this session of the General Assembly, to effect such a global ban.

The issue of small arms and light weapons brings me to the question of conflicts in various parts of the world that our Organization has increasingly been called upon to resolve. The international community faces the challenge of bringing peace in countries where warring factions show, in some cases, irreconcilable ethnic differences and other forms of intolerance.

The African region has its sad share of these conflicts that have led to great loss of life, displacement of people and the disruption of vital economic activities. Burundi is one such major challenge. The measures to restore the parliament in Burundi and unban political parties, which were announced on 11 September by the military regime of Major Pierre Buyoya, are steps in the right direction. My delegation, however, wishes to underscore the point that changes of Government should occur only through constitutional and internationally accepted means. Therefore, unless and until a constitutional Government is established in Burundi, my Government will continue to withhold recognition of the Buyoya regime. The immediate action of the countries of the Great Lakes region to impose sanctions on Burundi following the *coup d'état* of 25 July 1996 deserves the commendation of the United Nations. There is no doubt that this action is what has forced the military Government in Burundi to restore the parliament and to unban political parties.

We are encouraged with regard to Rwanda by the fact that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has finally been established and that its work has started. It is vitally important that the perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda in 1994 should be brought to justice. This would serve as a deterrent to others who would otherwise be tempted to commit similar crimes. The re-emergence of genocide, war crimes and other crimes against humanity should be a source of great worry to the international community. Such crimes should not be allowed to continue, because they violate fundamental human rights and strike at the very foundation of the international legal system.

The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has done an admirable job of containing the situation in Liberia and preventing it from degenerating further. We are now seeing more promising steps towards the settlement of the conflict in Liberia. The gains achieved in Liberia can only be consolidated by the continued support of the international community for ECOMOG so that the timetable adopted at the recent Abuja summit can be effectively implemented.

The peace process in Angola is also on track, as evidenced by the quartering and disarmament, which are now almost complete after some extensions. The Assembly is also aware that only two days ago the situation in Angola was deliberated upon by Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community in order to bring the leadership of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola-Partido Trabalhista (MPLA) and the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) together. Unfortunately, the UNITA leader, Mr. Jonas Savimbi failed to attend.

Efforts to bring peace to Angola will nevertheless continue. The regional summit on Angola demonstrated the strong commitment of the leaders of southern Africa to the resolution of the conflict in Angola. However, the international community needs to be continuously engaged in order to ensure that the situation is resolved. We urge that the integration of former UNITA guerrillas into the national army of Angola be speeded up to consolidate the peace process. Zambia would also like to urge Mr. Jonas Savimbi and other UNITA leaders to be more resolute in the implementation of the commitments they made in the Lusaka Protocol.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Angola, Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye, for the good work he has done in the Angolan peace process. However, even when peace finally comes to Angola, it will be important for the international community to provide assistance to that country in areas that will facilitate rapid national reconstruction, such as mine clearance.

The issue of Western Sahara continues to be Africa's last unresolved colonial question. My delegation believes that it is not beyond the wisdom of this Assembly to overcome whatever obstacles may be standing in the way of a referendum. We would therefore like to appeal to the principal parties to cooperate with the Secretary-General in finding a lasting solution to this problem.

With regard to Somalia, my delegation is concerned at the apparent lack of efforts by the international community towards finding a lasting solution to the crisis in that country. The situation in Somalia is also not conducive to regional peace and security. We therefore call upon the international community to seek ways and means through appropriate organs to assist the people of Somalia to reach accommodation with each other, just as we call on the Somali factions themselves to work towards a genuine political settlement so that peace may return to that country.

The situation in the Middle East is a source of great danger to regional peace and security. We urge the parties to the conflict not to abandon but to consolidate the peace process brought about through sacrifice and painstaking work. The violent confrontation that has taken place in the past three days is a matter of grave concern to us. Zambia still believes, however, that the parties will harness the moral courage and the political will that are necessary to return to the peace process. Zambia believes that for the peace process to restart and gain momentum, the new Government in Israel should respect and implement the agreements already reached on the Middle East peace process, in accordance with the norms of international law.

Since its inception, the United Nations has faced the challenge of facilitating effective international economic cooperation. However, we have yet to attain a satisfactory level where countries of the world can pursue prospects for development through the machinery of the Organization. Multilateralism is indispensable to the management of the process of the globalization of the world economy that is now going on. Major issues like foreign direct investment, currency stability, external debt problems, international trade and commodity price stabilization require durable multilateral cooperative arrangements.

It is the hope of my delegation that the current work taking place at the United Nations on an Agenda for Development, the strengthening of the United Nations and prospective new modalities for financing operational activities for development will generate possibilities to implement fully the provisions of Chapter IX of the Charter of the United Nations. It is also the hope of my delegation that the reform of the Bretton Woods institutions will not further erode the capacity of the United Nations to deal with economic questions.

It is, however, a matter of concern to my delegation that United Nations agencies and departments are facing budget cuts because of the continuing financial crisis of the world body. Our concern is heightened by the fact that in March this year, the United Nations embarked on a decade-long process of promoting African development through its System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. The United Nations, which is at the centre of the implementation of the Special Initiative, requires strong institutional capacities. The continuing financial crisis is certainly going to erode this institutional capacity further.

The Special Initiative and the Zambian economic reform programme complement each other. We hope that this is also the case with other African countries. We are also particularly happy that the Special Initiative gives prominence to peace-building, conflict resolution, national reconciliation and strengthening of the capacity for governance in the wide agenda of socio-economic development on the African continent. As is well known, economic progress in Africa has all too often been undermined by conflicts.

As the international community supports African development, we once again draw its attention to the burden of external debt that is stunting African development. Both the Special Initiative and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s recognize that the major obstacle to sustained economic growth and development is the problem of external debt. It is the expectation of my delegation that deeper debt reduction going beyond the Naples terms can be agreed upon in the near future. Deep debt reduction will go a long way in facilitating domestic savings and investments in Africa, especially in the social sectors, and thereby reduce poverty, environmental degradation and dependency on aid.

Before I conclude, I should say a few words about the political situation in Zambia. In November 1991, my country embarked on a multi-party democratic process. We are almost at the end of the first five-year period of democratization. Zambia will hold presidential and parliamentary elections this year under conditions of firm political stability. We are determined to maintain this stability by ensuring that peace prevails throughout the election period. The Movement for Multiparty Democracy, which is currently running the Government, has been unequivocal in condemning all forms of political violence and intolerance.

There is no political crisis in Zambia. The people of Zambia have continued with their daily lives in peace, security and full confidence in the political process of the country. In order to demonstrate good faith in the conduct of the democratic process, the Government of Zambia has invited international observers to participate in monitoring our elections. These are in addition to local independent election monitors. It is our desire that as many observers as possible should participate in this process, which is aimed at consolidating democracy.

Zambia believes that the ideals of the United Nations are indispensable to the development of the partnership of countries. It is therefore the supreme duty of all of us to promote and uphold them. In this context, I would like to conclude by reaffirming the faith of my delegation in the ideals of the United Nations.

Address by Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Suriname, His Excellency Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Wijdenbosch: May I first join preceding speakers and congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Suriname on your unanimous election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. On behalf of my delegation, I pledge you our full support as you carry out the weighty and challenging responsibilities of your office. I also wish to pay tribute to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral for the excellent and exemplary manner in which he presided over the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

The dynamic and extraordinary manner in which Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali has accomplished his mission as Secretary-General in difficult circumstances of financial constraints and wars within and among Nations, and his fostering of social and economic development, has earned our sincere gratitude. My Government believes that notable endeavours have been undertaken by His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali to shape the future of the United Nations in accordance with the needs and aspirations of today's world.

As members may know, the people of the Republic of Suriname, availing themselves of their fundamental democratic right through fair, free and secret elections on 23 May and 5 September 1996, have elected the new political leadership of the country. As testimony to this democratic process, I stand before the Assembly on behalf of my Government and people as the newly elected President of the Republic of Suriname.

My Government believes that the main challenge facing us is the difficult task of reversing the current tendency towards the social disintegration of the nation into a process of nation-building and creating social harmony.

The need for this is even more pressing, considering that Suriname has a small population, composed of different ethnic and indigenous groups and that the living conditions of large segments of its population have deteriorated significantly. One of the fundamental problems in meeting this challenge lies in the development of an economy that is diversified and not dependent on just one economic sector — and even less, dependent on a single donor country.

In order to ensure that our people have the actual enjoyment of human rights in the widest sense of the word, a social system will be created that will focus attention on guaranteeing every citizen minimal social security; creating a society in which the quality of life is equal for all and harmony is safeguarded; offering Surinamese women greater opportunities to develop their potentialities and to participate in the social structures, as well as enhancing, in the widest sense of the word, the care for the Surinamese child; providing for the basic needs of the people, such as food supply, health care, education, housing, public transport, water supply, employment, passable roads and affordable energy supply; and guaranteeing the protection of property by means of adequate security.

The Government of Suriname is aware that the realization of these tasks will demand great efforts from the Government itself and from the entire population. In this endeavour we shall work to bring about the administrative and budgetary decentralization of the administration through the strengthening of people-oriented democracy by giving participatory democracy the scope to develop.

The decentralization of legislation and administration will be given further attention, to facilitate regional and local development, with the full participation of regional and local structures. The necessary conditions will be created for an integrated approach to the development of the districts and the interior, so as to eliminate development lag in these regions. We fully realize that the responsibility for achieving this goal lies primarily with the Government and the people of Suriname. We acknowledge, however, that we live in a larger world, in a period in which having friendly relations is of eminent importance. In accordance with international law, and on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, Suriname will establish and maintain relations with friendly nations and international and regional organizations throughout the world.

Close relations with countries that are our neighbours from a historical, cultural or geographical point of view, especially France, Brazil and Guyana, and with Venezuela, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United States of America, will be maintained and deepened.

Furthermore, we will strengthen our efforts for full integration into the subregion, into the wider Caribbean region and into the Americas through our membership in the Caribbean Community and the Association of Caribbean States and through our participation in the free-trade zone to be established in the year 2005.

This approach demands a more business-like stance in multilateral and bilateral relations as concerns the principles of equality, mutual respect, and the interest and protection of our national sovereignty.

One of the most important characteristics of our era is the transitional phase we are going through, in which new ideas, new Powers, new values and norms have arisen, leaving their mark on both national and international politics, on the national and international economy, and on the formation and content of international relations. The United Nations, which plays a crucial role in defining international relations and creating favourable conditions for peace, stability and development, reflects this transitional process.

In considering the need to redefine the role and tasks of the United Nations in the post-cold-war era, some people question whether the United Nations still has a role to play in the international arena. As far as Suriname is concerned, the United Nations, as a centre of multilateral relations, has demonstrated its ability to play a unique role in the achievement of overall human development on a global scale. The United Nations has also demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for giving primacy to the ideals and aspirations enshrined in its Charter, and has indeed proved to be effective in the pursuit of such essential tasks as the maintenance of peace and security and the promotion of development.

Along these lines, we would like to emphasize that the continuation of the United Nations as a centre for multilateral discussion and action is indispensable. We acknowledge the need, however, to redefine its functions. First, there is a clear need to reform its bureaucratic structures in order to make it more effective and efficient and to bring it more in line with the aspirations of the majority of the world's population. Secondly, we must abide by our obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to provide the necessary funds for its proper functioning, even though a restructuring of the current scale of assessed contributions could be considered.

We believe that if the United Nations is considered as a train of peace and development on these two tracks, humankind will embrace our Organization, which will help us to move forward into the twenty-first century.

On the eve of the new millennium, it is imperative for the international community to seek solutions to pressing problems, of which abject poverty may well be the most compelling. The solemn commitments of the World Summit for Social Development and the launching of 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and the period 1997-2006 as the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty have our full support. There is evidence the world over that continuing poverty, if not addressed adequately, will result in social disharmony and in economic and political disorder, and will become a threat to national and international peace and stability, thereby negatively affecting the growth and consolidation of democracy and human rights.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Let it be understood that all efforts to combat the scourge of illicit drug trafficking, terrorism and organized crime will prove to be fruitless unless we present a united front to eradicate poverty.

Suriname has drawn unexpected international attention by its resolve to employ its timber resources for the development of its people. My Government is aware of the concern of the international community as to the possible consequences of an unsustainable use of our forest. There are many examples throughout the world on how we should not proceed, and we have learned from those experiences.

In order to strike a proper balance between our actual needs for development and the needs of future generations, the Government of Suriname will abide by the commitment expressed through its contribution at the Rio Conference in 1992 and to the subsequent investigations and deliberations at various levels of society in conjunction with foreign investors. In all these endeavours we will continue to be cautious, with due regard for the interests of potential investors, the interests of our indigenous people and the need to protect the interests of future generations.

We hope that the international community will also abide by its obligation to provide the necessary technological and financial assistance, thus contributing to the achievement of these goals. In this respect we look forward to the coming review meeting on the implementation of Agenda 21.

The Government of the Republic of Suriname is very concerned about the problem of illicit drug trafficking, because it poses special security problems for countries such as Suriname, which have insufficient resources to guard its hundreds of miles of shoreline and vast, underpopulated land areas. Therefore, as part of our policy of maximum cooperation in the fight against drugs, we have entered into cooperation agreements with many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially with those States adjacent to Suriname. In this context, I should like to mention the recently established and much appreciated cooperation between Surinamese police authorities and the drug enforcement agencies of the Government of the United States of America. However, finding an adequate solution to the drug problem will depend in no small measure on whether equal attention is given to both the supply and the demand sides of this phenomenon.

While reflecting on the issues facing our world and amidst the many challenges to creating global solidarity, my Government wishes to express its serious concerns over the developments in the Middle East, which have resulted in a virtual discontinuation of the historic peace process. We hope that the parties concerned and the international community will succeed in bringing the peace process back on track. The agony of bloodshed and the loss of lives must be avoided, and there are no alternatives to dialogue and peace.

I am deeply honoured to have had the opportunity to address this body on a number of issues that are of prime importance to the Government and the people of the Republic of Suriname. I would like to conclude by reiterating our commitment to contribute to the creation of a new world order characterized by the eradication of poverty and based on a more just distribution of wealth and on an atmosphere that augurs well for peace and global improvement of the quality of life on this beautiful planet.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Suriname for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Panama and former President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Illueca.

Mr. Illueca (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Panama wishes to join in the very warm congratulations that the President has already received from the speakers who have preceded me. His well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session attests to his skills and personal merits, and at the same time reflects the esteem that Malaysia, a prominent member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has come to enjoy in the family of nations.

I am also very pleased that this particular part of our meeting is being chaired by our colleague from the Philippines, Ambassador Mabilangan.

Allow me on this solemn occasion to pay tribute to the eminent Portuguese statesman Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who presided over the historic fiftieth session with great wisdom, poise and humanism and shed his particular light on the institutional reform of the United Nations.

At the fiftieth session of the General Assembly Panama proposed, together with the United States and France, that the United Nations and interested countries should take a decisive part in the holding of the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal, which will take place in September 1997. On that occasion the Assembly adopted resolution 50/12 (1995), which in its operative part,

> "Urges the competent organs, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, in particular, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Maritime Organization, to study the possibility of providing assistance from within existing resources for the organization of the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal". (resolution 50/12, para. 3)

In the first operative paragraph the Assembly noted that it

> "Supports the initiative of the Government of Panama in convening the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal, with the participation of Governments, international bodies, public and private academic institutions, maritime users and international shipping companies, to examine jointly the role which the Panama Canal should play in the twenty-first century". (Ibid., para. 1)

The Government of Panama has a particular interest in seeing that Member States of the United Nations, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations of the international community, are informed about how Panama, as a sovereign State, is preparing to take on all the responsibilities stemming from the final transfer of the interoceanic canal in 1999, pursuant to the provisions of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties.

One calendar year from the holding of the Congress, I wish to inform the General Assembly that the Panamanian Government is hard at work on preparations and stepping up consultations with international organizations and friendly countries in order to secure meaningful participation. The Panama Canal Congress will be universal in terms of participation; it will also be universal because Panama, with its universalist and Bolivarian traditions, takes the view that international maritime transport should be open uninterruptedly to all the flags of the world on an equal footing and under a neutral and universal regime that obliges us all to ensure its peaceful use and transit, taking into account the expansion of international trade and the growth of the world economy.

Ours is a time in which nations appear to be closer than ever and in which there are tremendous opportunities to improve the living conditions of all. At the same time, the existence of numerous imbalances, obstacles, risks and dangers gives Governments and peoples grounds for concern.

It is not only remarkable achievements of science, technology and trade that are being globalized; unfortunately, hunger and environmental degradation are also being globalized. There are still national and international situations that are marked by the denial of fundamental values and that affect human rights and the freedom of peoples. There are growing inequalities between members of our societies and between nations, and certain injustices still persist in some aspects of international relations. Arms trafficking and overt or covert resistance to agreements and initiatives to reverse the arms race are signs that attitudes of expediency are prevailing, to the detriment of our hopes for peace and agreement and our aspirations to sustainable development. Terrorism, organized crime and transnational crime conspire and feed off one another on an unprecedented international scale, exploiting the many faces of drug use, which is a threat to all mankind.

These concerns dominated the agenda of the Rio Group at its tenth summit, held a month ago in Cochabamba, Bolivia. It was an opportunity to underscore at the highest possible political level the serious challenges facing Latin America and the Caribbean, whose average poverty levels have reached alarming levels despite the tremendous efforts of our Governments to reduce them.

At that meeting the Panamanian Government stated — and I reaffirm here in this forum — that poverty and corruption are powerful forces threatening the democracies of the continent. On that occasion, the President of Panama, Mr. Ernesto Pérez Balladares, stated:

> "When Nations embark on political adventures divorced from institutionality, they do not do so because they reject in theory the benefits of democracy, but because they associate their own despair with the regime under which they live ... For this reason, until the new concepts governing economic relations among countries today and democracy throughout the continent are accompanied by investment in social sectors and a genuine modernization of education to help close the gap, the sectors of the population affected by poverty will ultimately reject what we here today quite rightly think should be permanent values of modern societies."

For this reason, we wish to reiterate our understanding of and solidarity with the problems of hunger and poverty suffered by countries in other regions, in particular the least developed countries, the majority of which are in Africa, and certain countries in our region that are particularly vulnerable. Whatever may be the standpoint chosen for consideration of the great issues contained on the agenda of this fifty-first session of the General Assembly, we should always approach them with the desire to respond appropriately.

The organization of social life always presupposes normative vision and action. The United Nations has proved its capacity to propose to the international community a body of norms whose effectiveness depends on their universal application. The fundamental debate that has been going on in the area of human rights since the creation of the United Nations has resulted in the enshrinement of those rights in legally binding texts and in declarations and programmes of action stemming from the major conferences held by the United Nations in recent years. We are encouraged by the fact that that enshrinement is encompassing the rights of solidarity in the context of problems concerning the environment, population, society, women's issues and housing.

The Government of Panama is mindful of the complex dialectic interactions between peace, human rights and development. The desire to ensure effective democratization in national life and to foster development is at the core of the activities the Panamanian Government is carrying out to benefit children, young people, women, indigenous and rural populations, the disabled and certain particularly disadvantaged urban groups.

The Government's activities relating to fulfilment of the Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing Conference on Women represent commitments strengthened by our justifiable satisfaction over Panama's fairly encouraging indicators regarding the advancement of women. The accent is currently being placed on the sector of the female population living in unfavourable conditions of health, housing and education and having little participation in political life.

In the context of this constantly renewed effort to find the best solutions to national problems, the delegation of Panama wishes to express to the Secretary-General our thanks and recognition for the cooperation activities that have been carried out in Panama by the United Nations Development Programme, as a recognized and neutral facilitator, to promote national consensus on the Panama Canal issues. The successes already achieved in this area demonstrate that the actions of the United Nations its system in Panama are effective and have an impact on the life of the nation.

Three months ago Panama ratified the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the implementation of which has become more effective since the establishment of the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Panama, as a maritime country, welcomes these promising developments and hopes that there will be further achievements in the application of the Convention.

The Government of Panama has great expectations for its future participation as a member of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and in the Commission on Sustainable Development. We will strive to make our contribution and to prove our commitment to overcoming environmental problems. The strategic importance of issues associated with biodiversity is such that my Government hopes that new and additional funds will be made available to promote activities in this field. We have the same hope in connection with climate change, the ozone layer, desertification and the conservation of forests.

In the area of international peace and security, we reconfirm our agreement with those Governments that advocate a total ban on the production, use, trafficking in and transfer of anti-personnel land-mines. With respect to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has been signed by Panama, we continue to hold the same view as in previous years. In this respect, we welcome Brazil's initiative to make the southern hemisphere a zone free of nuclear weapons. This estimable initiative adds to the efforts of Latin America and the Caribbean to foster a world free of nuclear weapons, efforts that were launched with the signing and ratification of the Tlatelolco Treaty.

Upon learning of the response of the International Court of Justice to the request issued by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, my Government welcomed the backing given by that principal organ of the United Nations to the negotiations on a ban on nuclear weapons, including tests. We signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on the understanding that implicit in it is a commitment on the part of world Powers to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Panama has always supported those who believe that if a part of the funds absorbed by the arms industry could be made available to combat poverty, ignorance and disease, there would be positive changes all over the face of our Earth.

Panama has already expressed in the United Nations its position and views on the problem of drugs, most recently at the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in June. We would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our support of Mexico's initiative, co-sponsored by the Rio Group, on convening a special session of the General Assembly in 1998, which would offer an opportunity to update the various debates, concepts, approaches and consensus positions on the issue of illicit drugs and related crimes. The Government of Panama has made significant progress in developing the proposal presented to the Rio Group to create a multilateral centre in Panama to combat drug trafficking and related crimes.

We are glad to announce the recent holding in our country of the first international talks on the creation of that centre, attended by Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela and Panama. We agreed at that meeting to hold another meeting in December 1996 to take decisions on the training module included in the plans for the multilateral training and research institute to combat drug trafficking and related crimes. Another meeting will take place early in 1997 to study and decide upon the operational module as a means of combatting drug trafficking and related crimes, which is essentially civilian in nature and cooperating with the military forces that will lend additional support.

In a similar vein, the Panamanian Government also lends its support and solidarity to the international community's struggle to combat terrorism. Terrorist activity, no matter what the reasoning behind it may be, is criminal and immoral, and exceeds all limits. Its sole face is that of fanaticism. Terrorism is the offspring of the apocalypse, nihilistic and gratuitous in nature, capable of crushing human freedom and claiming a terrible harvest of innocent lives.

Other topics on the agenda of this session of the General Assembly are of particular interest to the Government of Panama. Negotiations on establishing an Agenda for Development oblige us not only to talk about this but to act, prompted by the universal duty to cooperate which encompasses all individuals and all communities. The common undertaking of sustainable development should be carried out through shared responsibilities. For this reason, we welcome the decision taken by Member States to politically reactivate the Economic and Social Council. Now, what is needed is the political will to equip the United Nations with an Agenda for Development which will not limit development solely to its economic component: though that is necessary, it is not enough. Development should also provide the key part of common well-being and be placed at the service of purposes consciously accepted by all, purposes that will enrich the lives of all, purposes that will enhance the creative capacity of every individual and be securely grounded in a human dimension which implies faith in oneself and paves the way for progress.

Whatever approach is taken in addressing the major issues on the agenda of this fifty-first session of the General Assembly, the human being, his hopes and sufferings and the obstacles and opportunities he faces to improve the quality of his life, should always have precedence. In spite of the dazzling clarity with which we perceive this certainty, it would seem that we sometimes lose sight of the fact that the human individual is the ultimate focus of this Organization and of all the agreements and plans of actions that we arrive at within it and stemming from it. All our decisions should be designed to meet the demands, needs, requirements and interests of human beings.

This requires a revitalization of the ethical side of the United Nations. My delegation appreciates the endeavours of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He has placed his unquestioned talent and efforts at the service of the Organization. His unswerving internationalism and his commitment to world peace and development mean that Panama takes great pleasure in expressing its gratitude for his work.

A year ago we were welcoming the effort made by two great men who were struggling tirelessly to consolidate peace agreements and move towards peaceful coexistence in the Middle East. Today one of those men is no longer with us. Panama wishes to express a posthumous tribute of recognition to Yitzhak Rabin, a martyr of the peace process between two peoples, Palestine and Israel, with which our people and our Government have deeply-rooted friendly relations because the children of those peoples live together on our soil and are helping us to build a better country. Now that fratricidal struggle is casting both nations into mourning, Panama reaffirms its support for all the initiatives and resolutions that will strengthen peace and promote tolerance.

We are very concerned about the events which took place as a result of changes effected in the Holy Sites of Jerusalem, to which the Security Council referred in its resolution 1073 (1996) on Saturday, 28 September 1996. The Security Council called for an immediate cessation and reversal of all acts that had resulted in the aggravation of the situation and that had negative implications for the Middle East peace process. It likewise called for the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians to be ensured. Finally, it called for the immediate resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and the timely implementation of the agreements reached.

Another matter of concern to us relates to the Chinese people, a people with which Panama has maintained relations since very early in the last century. My country has benefitted from a continued migration which, from the building of the interoceanic railway to that of the Canal, has contributed to our development and to the fashioning of our national identity. This deep-rooted and lasting relationship with the Chinese people has strengthened our nation's and our Governments' support for the principle of the universality of the United Nations. Panama maintains diplomatic relations with the Republic of China and feels bound to state that those relations have been fruitful and beneficial. They have always been characterized by respect and have been receptive to and incorporated the interests and needs of both sides. For this reason, we feel that our relations are exemplary in the best possible sense.

On the other hand, in a few years' time Panama will assume full responsibility for the interoceanic Canal and, in the context of that responsibility, Panama must acknowledge that the People's Republic of China is one of the main users of the waterway both in terms of the number of vessels and in terms of the volume of cargo originating in or destined for the People's Republic of China. We are encouraged by the fact that a significant number of Chinese citizens and companies on both sides of the Taiwan Strait live and work in harmony in Panama, where they have won the respect and affection of Panamanians because of their diligent hard work. We are convinced of the validity of the principle of one China, and we reaffirm our support for the efforts of both parties to unify the Chinese people. We reiterate our conviction that they will achieve that purpose in a framework of mutual respect that gradually helps to build trust between the two parties and create a favourable environment for Chinese reunification.

The question of Security Council reform, the increase in the number of its members and other related matters is of irrefutable importance for the United Nations, as is the question of the strengthening of the role of the United Nations. It is unacceptable to try to change the membership of the Security Council solely on the basis of supposed essential features that make certain countries more suitable than others to join decision-making organs and hold seats in the Security Council. Because of the functions it performs, today's state of affairs and a moral commitment to the future of the United Nations, we call for a reform of the Security Council that will provide regional representation, an increase in both membership categories — permanent and non-permanent — and equitable distribution.

The Government of Panama regards the Italian proposal as a democratic approach that responds to the concern for representativity. We were encouraged by the willingness to negotiate, with a view to achieving consensus, voiced by the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs last week from this rostrum. In the issues of Security Council reform and the strengthening of the role of the United Nations, the best possible ideas and loftiest purposes should come into play. We wish to see a better, more effective and more representative Security Council. We would also like to see opportunities to participate in the United Nations go hand in hand with the responsibility to act to ensure international peace and security and for these to be seen from the perspective of their relationships with democracy and development. The Panamanian Government has decided to reaffirm its support for Japan and Germany having permanent seats on the Security Council.

I could not conclude without fulfilling my duty as a Panamanian to reiterate before this world Organization that Panama is ready to assume sovereign control over the Panama Canal in 1999, with all the administrative, operational and security responsibilities entailed in the full implementation of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. Panamanians' shouldering of the main responsibility for the Panama Canal will coincide with the advent of the twenty-first century. We shall march resolutely into the new millennium, looking forward to a promising future in which it will become clear that Panama's universalist vocation has never wavered, and we strongly reaffirm that vocation.

Panama's universalism, I am proud to say, is an ethical one, capable of absorbing the most diverse currents of thought and human action, whether from the North, South, East or West. Our geography made us this way, and our history opened us up to the world — obviously, commercially, but above all culturally.

As of 31 December 1999 Panama will be better integrated in the world because it will be able to make free use of its entire territory for the integration of its nation. We shall then have to cope with the tremendous need to make full use of our potential and abilities and to fully exercise our rights and fulfil our responsibilities. On 31 December 1999 the Panamanian nation will be at the centre of an excitement sparked by the joining in our veins and souls, of the past and the future, of the struggles of generations, of joy and suffering and of the many endeavours that all bear the same name, a name that designates a common objective, a single mission that many times engendered fervour and even heroism.

In the twenty-first century, Panama will still be a small country. What will be different, I repeat, is the full integration of the Panamanian nation in its territory, the simple but intense and far-reaching meeting of a nation with the entirety of its territory. The existence of an interoceanic waterway, the Panama Canal, in that territory will prompt us to pursue, step up and deepen our efforts to establish the right approaches and institutions to complete our sovereign life as a nation and to facilitate the fulfilment of our universalist vocation. That universalism will make it possible for us to continue to participate in the realities of a globalized and interdependent world with the desire to make it a source of mutual enrichment, openness, initiative and creativity.

It is a fortunate historical coincidence that on Wednesday of this week, 2 October 1996, the General Council of the World Trade Organization (WTO) decided to accept the report of its subsidiary organ concerning Panama's accession, thus ensuring its entry as a full member of the World Trade Organization. We welcome the fact that, with the accession of Panama, all countries in the Latin American region have become members of the WTO.

We all aspire to see a United Nations that will be ready to deal with present and future problems. Panama hopes to contribute to the vital consensuses and aspires to become part of the necessary renewal of the United Nations. As part of the Panamanian experience since the creation of the United Nations, I personally have taken part in the Organization's intergovernmental machinery often enough to be able to speak of faith. With faith in the United Nations, we have often been capable of moving mountains of mistrust and misunderstanding, which have covered the world in a landscape of conflict and deadlock. Thanks to that faith in the United Nations, today we can speak of new generations of human rights and new generations of peacekeeping operations, which, in the view of men and women of my generation are proof that the United Nations represents a victory over the erosive effects of time and history.

My delegation believes that the United Nations has accomplished wonderful tasks through its constructive consideration of various manifestations of human diversity and through the taking of decisions that give them a productive, secure and peaceful place on Earth.

The Acting President: The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Poseci Bune, Chairman of the delegation of Fiji, upon whom I now call.

Mr. Bune (Fiji): My delegation joins others in warmly congratulating Ambassador Razali Ismail on his election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His election is indeed, and in fact, a tribute both to him and to his great country, Malaysia. I would assure him of my delegation's full cooperation during his tenure of office.

It also gives me great pleasure to extend the profound gratitude of my delegation to the outgoing President of the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who presided over the session with such great skill, dexterity and expertise.

Lasting peace and security on our planet are the very cornerstones of progress and prosperity in our nation States. They are the cornerstones of accelerated development, to which we all, developing and least developed countries, aspire.

Mankind has fervently sought to live in peace and security throughout the ages, but lasting peace and security in our world have been very elusive, particularly during this century. In the early part of this century, we became embroiled in the First World War. We all thought that that was the war to end all wars, and then came the Second World War, two decades later. It was the worst destructive war of our times, and it left many challenges to peace and security in its wake.

The end of the war saw our world bipolarized and busy with the pursuit of spheres of influence by the two super-Powers, which culminated in a new era, the cold-war era. Prospects for peace and security in our world faded as the super-Powers and other major Powers began a race for the production and stockpiling of new weapons of war and mass destruction.

The world entered a new phase, the nuclear age, when several Powers began to develop, test and produce nuclear weapons. The testing of those weapons to make them even more powerful took place in many parts of the world, including my country's own region in the South Pacific. In such a milieu, peace and security became a constant prayer but a distant hope, as many of us in the non-nuclear world were filled with foreboding that our world was on the brink of nuclear extinction.

In such a horrific scenario, common sense began to prevail, and that common sense, buoyed by the initiatives of this important Organization, the United Nations, led to the conclusion of several important but limited treaties and to the Conference on Disarmament. Those initiatives were ultimately crowned with success when, on 10 September 1996, in an extended fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the vast majority of the world's nations adopted the text of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the CTBT.

In the context of the South Pacific region, with the adoption of the CTBT, the signature by the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France of the Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone Treaty — the Treaty of Rarotonga — and the ratification by France of the Protocols, my country and the countries of the region can breathe a sigh of relief at the cessation of the assault on our environment. Now our Governments can focus on the economic and social utilization of our natural resources to improve and increase the standard of living of our peoples without having to worry as much as we have in the past about the effects nuclear testing was having on the health of our people and the environment of the region. To further enhance this positive and welcome development, we urge the United States and the United Kingdom to ratify the Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone Treaty.

My country hails the adoption of the CTBT as one of the greatest achievements of the international community this century. It represents an imposing foundation for the establishment of lasting peace and security in our world.

The CTBT may not be the paragon of virtue most of us probably expected it to be. It is, nevertheless, a bold and constructive initiative that is meaningful and at the same time a reassurance of our survival of the nuclear menace. All of us must take the responsibility of assuring the success of the Treaty. My country calls on all nations of the world, in the interest of lasting peace and security on our planet and in the interest of all mankind, to sign and ratify the CTBT. Fiji signed the CTBT the day it was opened for signature. My Government has already decided to ratify it.

In the final analysis, we do not see the adoption of the CTBT as the final nail in the coffin of nuclear weapons. To achieve our ultimate and pre-eminent aim and our desire for lasting peace and security in our world, my country would like to see the CTBT as merely the first step towards an end to the production of all nuclear weapons, an end to the stockpiling of all nuclear weapons, the ultimate destruction of all nuclear weapons, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world and general disarmament as a whole.

Today, while we rejoice with a degree of relief at the adoption and signing of the CTBT, it is at the same time also incumbent upon us not to relax our vigilance with regard to the moves and proposals in certain quarters to import and dump nuclear waste and other forms of hazardous waste in our region. I refer specifically to reported plans afoot by certain unscrupulous nuclear-waste dealers to use the Palmyra Islands and certain other sites in the Pacific as permanent disposal facilities for nuclear waste.

My country wishes to make it clear to all concerned that we in the Pacific region will not sit idly by and allow any further reckless and mindless destruction of our environment and detriment to the health of our people through any form of nuclear contamination.

The stark reality of international affairs in our world today is that total nuclear disarmament and general disarmament, or even accelerated movement towards those goals, will not end tensions and conflicts and threats to peace. Even when weapons were made of stone, tensions, threats to peace and conflicts existed. And when we look at the events that are happening at present in a number of countries around us, my country recognizes, and I am sure we all do, that we must create in our international life a system of preventive diplomacy that can respond promptly, positively, peacefully and effectively to potential conflicts and threats of genocide, and de-escalate internal tensions and threats to internal and regional peace. My country wishes to recall its recommendation to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly that earnest and urgent action should be taken to set up a special United Nations department or unit to pursue preventive diplomacy in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The department, in collaboration with competent countries and authorities, should have the capacity to receive, collate, analyse and interpret intelligence information and reports with a view to early detection of potential conflicts and early reaction to contain, minimize and resolve such conflicts in collaboration with relevant Member States. We should take every step within our power to prevent fires rather than having to put them out, to save lives rather than having to condemn the loss of lives.

Accordingly, my country welcomes the offer made by Norway in the General Assembly to establish a fund for preventive action at the United Nations and that country's pledge to provide some financial contribution to the fund annually.

In our efforts to promote, establish and maintain peace and security in our world, it is incumbent upon us to recognize and realize that security has several dimensions, not the least of which is economic security.

Sluggish economic development and limited development growth have affected developing countries and in particular, small island States, threatening national regional stability in one way or another. My country therefore calls on the international community, first, to increase official development assistance and to improve the quality of such assistance to developing countries; secondly, to cooperate in the creation of a more equitable international economic environment and thereby help to promote sustained economic growth and sustainable development, and at the same time, help to eradicate poverty; thirdly, to dismantle trade barriers and restrictions to market access; fourthly, to improve the access of developing countries to capital from international financial institutions and commercial sources; and lastly, to facilitate and assist the flow of investment capital and appropriate technologies to developing countries.

We have noted with concern that donor countries have failed to comply with the internationally agreed targets of official development assistance and commitments for new and additional resources. There is urgent need for a substantial expansion of official development assistance and for qualitative improvements in official development assistance by donor countries through a reduced cost of repayment. In fact, my country has noted with deep regret that while some developed countries have been making efforts to meet the official development assistance level, such assistance from some rich countries has been declining noticeably, and the decline has been taking place in the post-cold-war era, when it was to be expected that such countries were in a better position to increase the flow of official development assistance as a result of greater stability in the world and reduced tensions between former antagonists. In fact, in the case of a few traditional donors, aid has almost completely dried up. In some cases, aid is being systematically reduced. It appears that our region is no longer a strategic area for competition by the former cold-war antagonists to gain our favour.

My country is concerned to see the recent trend in some countries to seek to impose alien norms on countries with a unique, traditional and customary nature of society, especially indigenous societies. On the other hand, with respect to Japan and some South-East Asian countries such as Malaysia, development assistance is provided with no intention of interfering in their internal affairs.

International cooperation for development lies at the very heart of improving the living conditions of the great majority of people in our world who live in developing and least developed countries. My country fully supports an Agenda for Development, which is aimed at restoring the imperative of development as a central concern. Such an agenda should contain specific, concrete and pragmatic proposals that could be translated into action programmes and implemented on the basis of global priorities.

The Agreement amending the fourth Lomé Convention between the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and the European Community, signed in Mauritius on 4 November 1995, includes a Second Financial Protocol that ensures that the European Development Fund will be available for development projects in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries up to the end of February 2000. This commitment by the European Union is a direct endorsement of a multilateral accord and a North-South development instrument that has worked and that has been widely acclaimed throughout the world. Many critics are predicting the end of Lomé by the year 2000. However, within the Community itself, and within the 70 African, Caribbean and Pacific States, the idea of a successor agreement to Lomé IV is a *fait accompli*. That in itself is a firm and unambiguous recognition of the dire need for such an instrument beyond the year 2000.

It is therefore our — and indeed everyone's — responsibility to protect and defend the principles and philosophy behind an accord such as the Lomé Convention. Those who are carried along by the liberalization of the so-called winds of change that are sweeping through the continents must realize that parts of our international community will still require preferential arrangements in the interest of economic and political parity and of equity, peace and stability in the world.

It is sad to note that the developed countries have so far failed to fulfil their commitments to provide new and additional financial resources and technology transfer to the developing countries on favourable terms. The implementation of such commitments is most necessary for international economic cooperation, as is meaningful and effective follow-up to major conferences.

My country calls for the prompt and full implementation of the commitments and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which are more relevant today than ever before. We believe that under UNCED developing countries should have the right to benefit fully from the utilization of their natural resources if they are to achieve sustained economic growth and maintain sustainable development.

We wish to highlight the continuing urgent need to promote and facilitate industrialization as an instrument to facilitate rapid economic and social development in developing countries, which will contribute to the elimination of poverty and the generation of productive employment. The strengthening of the industrial bases of developing and least developed countries should become an international imperative.

My country calls on the international community to ensure an open, rule-based, equitable, secure, non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable multilateral trading system with the aim of achieving the complete integration of the developing countries into the world economy and the new international trading system.

We call upon Member States to implement fully the commitments agreed to in the Final Act adopted by the World Trade Conference, which confers special and differential treatment on developing countries. We believe that the carefully balanced package of rights and obligations with respect to the World Trade Organization should be carefully preserved and that the essential priority should be the implementation and fulfilment of such rights and obligations and the adoption of measures to mitigate adverse consequences on the developing countries.

The present unfair trading system is stagnating the economies of small island States when the international community is committed to protecting them. Fiji has deregulated its economy and its trade system, but we are deterred in our efforts to gain access to the markets of some developed countries, which still retain regulatory barriers of one kind or other.

My country therefore warmly welcomes the statement by the British Foreign Minister in this Assembly that the developed world must demolish the barriers it still maintains against imports from the developing world and the concomitant commitment to bring a vision of global free trade to reality by the year 2020.

It is sad to note that the debt crisis persists as one of the main constraints to development in developing countries. We wish to stress the urgent need for the international community, particularly donor countries and international financial institutions, to adopt an effective, comprehensive and equitable development-oriented and durable solution to the debt problem of developing countries.

My country strongly supports the World Food Summit to be held at Rome next month. It is the first time that world leaders will meet to debate and renew a commitment to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and to address the issues of food security for all peoples through the adoption of policies and actions at the national, subregional, regional and international levels.

As we pursue initiatives on several fronts to promote and facilitate lasting peace and security in our world, we have to be mindful of areas of tension that exist concurrently.

The Washington Middle East peace summit has come and gone, but at least it succeeded in bringing together the leader of Israel and the Palestinian leader in dialogue and discussion. We urge the parties to pursue in a meaningful way the initiative set in motion by the Washington summit. We also urge continued restraint by all. Killing and lamentations may have become an established way of life in the region, but peace and peaceful coexistence are the only civilized way towards progress and prosperity for all. We call upon the parties to undertake genuine and constructive action to negotiate, achieve and maintain a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Dayton accords succeeded in bringing a halt to armed hostilities in war-torn Bosnia. General elections have been held, but the situation remains fragile and the conclusion is inescapable that the international peacekeeping presence in Bosnia should remain for some time to come to consolidate the gains that have been achieved so far.

Recent events in Cyprus have reminded us that the tense situation in that country persists, and my country continues to urge all parties to accelerate the pace of the negotiations in the interest of finding a constructive, just and lasting solution as early as possible.

Recent events in the Straits of Taiwan have highlighted the tension that exists in that region of the world, a region which is otherwise currently witnessing a most dynamic economic growth. Both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, which are also active participants in post-forum dialogue with the island countries of the South Pacific Forum, contribute significantly to the development of the South Pacific region. My country welcomes the spirit of cooperation between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China and encourages the continuation of such dialogue and cooperation.

The genocide in Rwanda and Burundi imposes an obligation on our community of nations to pursue every possible initiative to prevent tragedies of such magnitude and to avoid a recurrence whenever and wherever they occur, and not on a selective basis or to serve the self-interest of one or another major Power. The conclusion is inescapable that such problems should not be left entirely to regional organizations to resolve, since they may have neither the capacity nor the resources to deal effectively with the situation.

My county condemns international terrorism and will fully support all international efforts and measures to eliminate international terrorism. We will also support initiatives to negotiate an international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

We fully support international efforts in crime prevention and criminal justice and are fully appreciative of the preparatory work being done on the establishment of an international criminal court.

My country would like to reemphasize its strong view that the question of the protection and security of small States should remain a central concern of the United Nations. For as long as drug traffickers, international arms dealers, money launderers and international white-collar criminals continue their criminal activities, and as long as mercenaries and terrorists exist, small States will remain vulnerable to acts of aggression from without as well as from within. Small States especially look to the provisions of the United Nations Charter for the respect and preservation of their sovereignty.

My country continues to urge all parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to move speedily towards the conclusion of an effective protocol that would ultimately bring about improvements in the global climate system. My country is one of the many that is vulnerable to rising sea levels, hurricanes and other phenomena associated with disastrous climate changes. Our physical survival could be affected if immediate action is not taken to address the problem of climate changes in our world. The meeting of the South Pacific Forum held in the Marshall Islands from 3 to 5 September this year highlighted the Forum's concern that climate change has become a crucial issue within the region. It called — and we share that call — for urgent action, particularly in view of the second assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which stated that the balance of scientific evidence suggested a discernible human influence on the global climate. The Forum welcomed the outcome of the second session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and called for acceleration of negotiations on the text of a legally binding protocol or another legal instrument to be completed in time for adoption at the third session of the Conference of Parties in order to achieve significant progress towards the goal of lower greenhouse-gas emissions.

The South Pacific Forum also called upon all countries to support the activities of the Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate and reaffirmed its support for the inclusion of the draft protocol presented by the Alliance of Small Island States for consideration in the negotiating process.

My country warmly welcomes the recent establishment of the International Seabed Authority and the election of the judges of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. These new developments, together with the successful completion last year of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, will maintain the momentum in the implementation of the Law of the Sea Convention. In particular, we support the promotion of the regime for the sustainable utilization of the living resources of the sea.

It is our sincere hope that the International Seabed Authority will administer the resources of the sea for the benefit of mankind. My country calls on the international community and the United Nations, in accordance with the decision of the General Assembly taken in July 1994 to provide adequate funding and adequate technical support to the International Seabed Authority so that it can competently discharge in a most effective and efficient manner the responsibilities we gave it under the Convention. My delegation is pleased to be a sponsor of a draft resolution seeking the granting of observer status in the United Nations for the International Seabed Authority.

The United Nations has done a remarkable and excellent job in carrying out its mandates during the 51 years of its existence. It has played a significant, discernible and indispensable role in human affairs, from the peaceful resolution of conflicts and peacekeeping to economic development and social progress, from food and agriculture to employment and labour standards, from helping the children of our world to fostering human rights and justice. The international community is deeply indebted to the United Nations, which should continue to be a forum for multilateral cooperation and not an instrument that major Powers may use to serve their own national self-interests. My country acknowledges with profound gratitude the assistance and cooperation it has been receiving from the United Nations in its national and regional development efforts. Fiji continues to pledge its commitment to the United Nations and to what it stands for.

It is appropriate to observe, however, that in order to respond to the many demands of this complex world in which we all live, the United Nations has had to expand. Over a period of years, it has become very heavy, thereby greatly increasing the cost of its operation. The unhealthy state of United Nations finances does not derive, however, solely from the Organization's enhanced and expanding structure. It has also been exacerbated by the non-payment of dues and assessments. We call on all Member States that have not paid their dues or assessments and are in arrears to pay them promptly, fully and without conditions.

My country appreciates the steps taken this year by the United Nations administration to improve management, to make services more efficient and more effective and to cut costs. Notwithstanding the action that has been taken, my country believes that more can and should be done to make the Organization leaner and more streamlined and at the same time to reduce costs further. The various organs, agencies and departments of the United Nations need to be rationalized in line with the modalities of today's world, and structural changes and more personnel reforms must be instituted to make it more responsive to the constant demands of a continuously changing international community.

My country believes that the scale of assessments for the apportionment of expenses should be reassessed to make it more equitable and less burdensome for small island States.

My country believes that the time has come for the reform of the Security Council. We submit, as we did last year, that the organs of the United Nations should reflect changes in the global political landscape as well as the principles of geographic representation and equity. The Security Council should, in our view, be enlarged to accommodate the existing global political landscape.

Since peace and security underpin the very foundation of this Organization, my country fully supports the international peacekeeping missions of the United Nations. We are committed to the maintenance of international peace and security and, despite the fact that we are a small, developing island State with a small population, we have actively participated in the vast majority of United Nations peacekeeping missions. Fijian soldiers are serving in the Middle East with both the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the Multinational Force and Observers, as well as in Iraq and Kuwait. They have served in Afghanistan, Somalia and in Rwanda. Our policemen, too, have served in Angola, Cambodia, Namibia and Iraq, and are currently serving in Eastern Slavonia and in Croatia. Several of our men have lost their lives in the service of the international community and in the pursuit of peace and security in our world.

Peacekeeping is the responsibility of all Member States, whether they contribute troops and personnel or not. We therefore urge all countries concerned to expedite the settlement of the assessments for peacekeeping due to the United Nations. And in turn, we urge the United Nations expeditiously and fully to settle the amounts or arrears outstanding to Member countries for their participation in peacekeeping operations.

As I stated previously, international security has many dimensions. The security of the world's indigenous peoples is one such dimension. The history of the world's indigenous peoples is replete with wholesale slaughter, genocide and, in some cases, total annihilation during the era of exploration, discovery and colonization.

The Prime Minister of Fiji, the Honourable Sitiveni Rabuka, told the United Nations last year that it:

> "must guarantee that external values and forces do not continue to coerce political concessions, economic reforms and social changes not desired by indigenous peoples themselves". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 40th meeting, p. 49)*

At the opening of the regional workshop on the draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples held in Fiji last month, the Prime Minister of Fiji declared that:

> "In our Pacific home, we have been sole proprietors in most places for no less than three thousand years; in most other places, for much longer."

Our Prime Minister stated that it must be legally accepted that:

> "We are the first settlers, first dwellers or proprietors of our land. Secondly, we are a collective group that was imposed upon by uninvited external forces who disrupted the normal march of our history. As victims of what continues to be described as imperialism and colonialism, we cannot, in our quest for freedom, allow the vestiges of foreign domination to encroach upon us, either through internal machinations or external collusion."

The Fiji workshop agreed in principle that, wherever possible, efforts to strengthen the text of the current draft declaration should be encouraged. The unanimous view of the workshop was that efforts by States to undermine the existing language of the draft should be actively resisted by indigenous peoples. The workshop further resolved that Pacific indigenous peoples should seek to promote greater support for the draft declaration within the United Nations system so that the overall objective of achieving an effective and meaningful declaration on indigenous peoples is reached.

My country, which has had a multiracial population for the last 150 years, warmly welcomes the observance of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. We strongly urge, during the International Decade, the adoption of the declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. My country believes that the declaration should not be the alpha and the omega of indigenous rights, but should be merely a first step towards the negotiation, under the auspices of the United Nations, of a comprehensive legal convention on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Tension and fears among the indigenous people in Fiji led to the military overthrow of the Government in 1987 and the promulgation of a new Constitution in 1990 by an interim Government. That Constitution provided indigenous Fijians majority representation in Parliament. That Constitution was reviewed by a three-member commission headed by Sir Paul Reeves of New Zealand. After over 12 months of review, the commission recently submitted its report and recommendations to the Government. The Government has duly submitted the report to Parliament and a Select Committee, comprising representatives of all the political parties in Parliament, has been appointed to consider the Commission's report and recommendations.

Lasting peace and security in our world has been an illusion for the greater part of this century. With the new global changes, with our recent adoption of the CTBT, with rising optimism regarding the Conference on Disarmament, with what can be perceived as a genuine desire for peace, and with more meaningful international collaboration in the areas of economic cooperation and development, there is some hope for achieving lasting peace and security in our world.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Planning and Environment of Seychelles, Her Excellency Mrs. Danielle de St. Jorre.

Mrs. de St. Jorre (Seychelles) (*interpretation from French*): The course of history appears to unwind rapidly and with it, events occur, pass or recede into time, imbuing the lives of our societies with the dual sensation of dizzying progress and desperately slow evolution. It is essential for people to live in harmony and to face, with a feeling of unity, goodwill and sharing, the great challenges which they could not overcome alone. That is why we are gathered here. We believe that, without each other, we are weak and vulnerable and that, in order to live better, it is essential that we be able to share and work together.

Upon reflection, however, it becomes more and more clear that some of the countries that are developing more rapidly, thanks to the advantages of technological and scientific progress, are losing interest in those still struggling to survive and still facing economic difficulties, food shortages and problems of health and education. To all this can be added other, equally serious evils: the effects of drugs, alcoholism, criminal behaviour and prostitution in all its forms.

In our international forums we often speak of security, of action to combat international terrorism and of the war on organized crime. Just recently, we were talking about working together against paedophilia. These are such horrible, painful things, but unfortunately so characteristic of our times.

So how can we not strongly condemn these attacks on human security and dignity? But it is even more important that our rejection of these crimes affecting the world be felt with the same degree of intensity, regardless of the country where they are committed — especially when some countries lack the means to combat the crimes. Should not the spirit of solidarity imply a concern for the well-being and security of all the inhabitants of the world? Should not each and every nation shed its selfish, hypocritical attitudes?

By not seeing further than our own interests, we treat others as our lowly tools. And yet we are well aware that feelings of frustration and injustice are the source of so much violence which so frequently plunges the world into mourning and makes people fear for their security. Therefore, if we want to world to develop harmoniously, we must break the bonds of this indolent selfishness in which people see everything around them through the prism of self-satisfaction.

If the existence of the United Nations is now threatened and if serious problems are undermining it and weakening the international community, it is precisely because the strongest partners will not agree to adopt the rules that govern any family, in which everyone's opinions are heard and discussed and the strong support and help the weak.

Instead, what do we observe? The most-favoured nations seem to carry little about and refuse resolutely to address the realities handicapping the developing countries. Calculations, assessments, criteria are separated into categories, mechanically, as if nations and peoples can be reduced to mere statistics. It must be said that the generous efforts of some rich countries, while helping developing countries, also benefit, one way or another, directly and indirectly, the stingiest countries.

Are we still seeking justice, equality and sustainable development throughout the world? In any case, the image the world projects of itself does not reflect these ideals, but rather two poles spinning further and further apart: the pole of wealth and the pole of poverty. It's not that there has been a lack of international meetings, at the highest levels, to try to find more effective solutions to reduce the level of poverty, increase the equity of trade and so forth. But it seems that, with each meeting, these problems get worse.

The firm ground of progress is crumbling under the feet of the developing countries and their future — given their current relations with the Powers holding the reins of the global economy — seems quite uncertain. This is especially true for the small island developing States like the Seychelles, whose only resources are the precarious revenues of tourism, which is subject to so many vicissitudes, and fishing. Their meagre resources, pumped into a network of tremendous competition, require them to make titanic efforts. Like many other countries whose territories were long exploited by a great Power and then suffered the repercussions of being suddenly abandoned without compensation, the Seychelles' economy is even more vulnerable than it was before being buffeted by this phenomenon.

As they do every year, many speakers have underscored the importance of preserving the environment in the context of sustainable development. The President of the United States himself underscored this fact:

(spoke in English)

> "Our planet is safer because of our common efforts to close Chernobyl, to address the challenges of climate change, to protect the world's forests and oceans. Now we must uphold our duty as custodians of our environment so that our children will inherit an even healthier planet." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 14)*

(spoke in French)

And, at the annual meeting of the Bretton Woods institutions, United States Vice-President Albert Gore Jr. also made this point.

(spoke in English)

> "But it also means giving greater attention to broad issues that I firmly believe must shape and inform everything we do in our quest for equitable and sustainable global prosperity. The first of these is a commitment to sustainable development and our environment. We now know with perfect clarity that

> economic development and growth cannot ignore ecological realities. We know that investments that genuinely reduce poverty in an equitable and enduring way are investments that take their environmental implications fully into account. Not only is such an approach consistent with our development objectives, but it will also be much more cost effective. Win-win situations are not always available, but this is one of them and it is available."

(spoke in French)

And yet, many of our countries, although their survival depends on the entire world preserving the environment, find themselves left by the wayside when certain great Powers — having no further need of the hospitality of their shores for their military or other installations — light-heartedly depart, leaving behind them a trail of debris and other things and leaving it up to the countries themselves to do the rest. As for the damages and costs — let's not talk about them.

As for the reforms of the institutions of the United Nations system, the Seychelles is in favour of all proposals aimed at improving the representation of the smaller States in our work. We believe that the international community must hear our voices, understand us and deal with the specifics of our situation. Furthermore, to be more objective, the assessment criteria now being massively applied to all the developing countries, which require more focused attention, should be re-examined in the light of the vulnerability index. The index is too easily ignored, but is nonetheless very important in the establishment of the objective data defining the profile of any given country.

The fashion for what is commonly called "democracy" is sweeping the surface of the earth, and one of the principal criteria which the developed countries — democracy's self-appointed guarantors — use for deciding eligibility for development assistance is the establishment of a democratic system. Shouldn't that respectable institution, democracy, be manifest within the Organization itself when it elects a competent and honest leader in whom to duly vest its authority? In seeking to impose its logic by one way or another, in seeking to make its choice the majority's choice, we are far from honouring the principle on which democracy is founded: majority rule. In other words, for a matter such as the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Secretary-General, we should better gauge the pros and cons, leaving aside those which may seem a little too individualistic. We must be able to accept, particularly if qualifications justify it, the choice of the majority of the Members of this eminently democratic institution: the United Nations.

To conclude, I express my best wishes for greater concord in the future of the United Nations, which represents the voice and the will of the peoples of the world, so that the endeavour to which so much effort and generosity has been devoted may produce decisions and actions that will create for all the children, women and men of the Earth a way of life in which relations become more humane and thus more conducive to the advent of a harmonious global society.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas.

Mr. Chambas (Ghana): My delegation wishes to express its satisfaction and joy in seeing Mr. Razali Ismail preside over the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His unanimous election is an honour to him personally and also to his country, Malaysia, with which Ghana has forged very warm and special relations. We have no doubt that his sterling qualities and long record of distinguished service to his Government and the international community will stand him in good stead in leading this Assembly to a successful conclusion of its work.

To his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, we wish to express our appreciation for the able manner in which he led us through very difficult negotiations during his presidency.

Our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has demonstrated, through his indefatigable energy and commitment to the independence and well-being of the United Nations, that he is up to the challenges that lie ahead of us in seeking to revitalize this Organization for the twenty-first century.

It was only a year ago that we celebrated with fanfare the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of our Organization. The world leaders assembled in this Assembly at that time once again rededicated themselves to achieving the visions embodied in the Charter of our Organization and fulfilling its goals and objectives, which serve the largest interests of humanity. We have gathered here again this year to take stock of developments since our last meeting and to renew, through various decisions and resolutions, our commitment to the promotion of peace and prosperity for our mutual benefit.

The end of the cold war provides us with a golden opportunity to work earnestly in pursuit of the international community's desire for general and complete disarmament — including nuclear disarmament — to be achieved under effective international control. Through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and nuclear-weapon-free zones, most of us non-nuclear-weapon States are making our contributions in this respect. My Government is in the process of ratifying the Pelindaba Treaty, of which we are a proud signatory, and we appreciate the support of the non-nuclear and nuclear-weapon States for that Treaty. However, such zones can only be given meaning by the nuclear-weapon States' genuinely accepting the need for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a given time-frame. It is with this in view that my country voted in favour of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and signed it, despite its shortcomings. We see the Treaty as a first step in the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons in the world.

We also join the Non-Aligned Movement in urging all nuclear-weapon States to conclude an international instrument that would offer unconditional and legally binding assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. This will enable all States subscribing to international instruments on non-proliferation to cooperate freely and unconditionally in the application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

We will also continue to urge that more attention be paid to conventional armaments and to efforts to enhance international cooperation to curtail and eventually prohibit the use of anti-personnel land-mines and other inhumane weapons, which continue to inflict untold damage and hardship on innocent people long after the conflicts in which they were deployed have ended. Similar attention should be given to international cooperation in curbing illicit transfers of arms. Success in this field will go a long way towards curtailing the availability of weapons, which feed the numerous conflicts we have had to contend with in recent years, to drug traffickers and terrorists.

Internal strife within States, nurtured by racial and religious intolerance, and the resort to arms for the settlement of disputes threaten the very existence of a number of States in diverse regions of the world. In all of these States, the intransigence of warlords poses serious challenges to the capacity of the international community in general and the United Nations in particular to meet their responsibilities with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. We have seen this in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Liberia and Haiti. The efforts made so far to deal with these conflicts are laudable, but more needs to be done.

That is what we are doing in West Africa, despite the recent setbacks suffered from the attacks on forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in December 1995 and the outbreak of fighting in Monrovia in April and May 1996. Though the implementation of the programme for the disarmament and demobilization of the fighters, their reinsertion into normal civil life and the holding of democratic elections in Liberia, as set out in the Abuja Agreement, are now behind schedule, the meeting of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on Liberia, in August 1996 in Abuja, saw the Liberian factional leaders renew once again their support for the peace process and their pledges to cooperate with the efforts to bring the Abuja Agreement back on track. Thus far we have been able to restore the capital, Monrovia, to its status as a safe haven and reinstate the Council of State and the Liberian National Transitional Government. The ceasefire between the warring factions in the country has remained largely respected, although there are still disturbing reports of hostilities between some of the factions.

We do appreciate the assistance of some individual countries to ECOMOG, as well as the cooperation of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, but we wish to stress once again that these modest forms of support are grossly inadequate, viewed against the enormity of the tasks in Liberia and the present state of the economies of ECOWAS member States. The Liberian factional leaders are tired of the war. The subregion has been able to broker peace amongst them, but it lacks the means to provide the resources to implement the peace accord. The international community should respond to the call for resources now or run the risk of the situation deteriorating once again. We shall not tire of reminding the international community that this Organization, the Security Council in particular, bears the ultimate responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Regional or subregional efforts like ours can only complement, not substitute for, those of the international community, which must face its responsibilities more seriously in Liberia.

For our part, we in Ghana have endeavoured over the years to play the role assigned to us within the limits of our resources in meeting our common responsibilities towards the maintenance of international peace and security. Since our participation in the United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Belgian Congo — now Zaire — in the 1960s, Ghana has been present in almost all the continents where United Nations peacekeeping duties call, and we are indeed proud of our contribution to these international peace efforts.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, we cannot hide our amazement that some people and their God-given territories remain under colonial or alien domination and foreign occupation. Even more astonishing is the fact that some otherwise democratic, administering countries and colonial Powers fail to recognize the inalienable right of the administered or colonial peoples to self-determination, and they fail to recognize that colonial domination is among the worst forms of violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of colonial peoples.

It is therefore no accident that we should be gravely concerned at the continuing lack of progress on the question of Western Sahara. Despite all of its shortcomings, the settlement plan agreed to by the parties to the Western Sahara problem, under the auspices of this Organization, remains the best option for pursuing a long-lasting solution in the interest of the Saharan people. We remain concerned that the identification process has had to be suspended and the Identification Commission withdrawn as a result of the failure of the parties to agree on some relevant important procedures and modalities. To break the stalemate, dialogue is essential, and we once more call on the Assembly to encourage the principal parties to the conflict to engage, under the auspices of the United Nations, in direct talks that can open the way for the continuation of the identification process. Urgent attention and action is required to bring to an end the present unacceptable situation, which poses a veritable threat to subregional, regional and wider international security.

In a similar vein, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our unflinching support for the Middle East Peace Process initiated at the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 and culminating in the Oslo accords. Over the past five years, several gains have been made, giving rise to hopes that a just and comprehensive peace in the region is attainable that would take cognizance of the legitimate right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and their right to an independent state. We therefore see the recent outbreak of violence in the area as a set-back to those laudable efforts and as a reflection of a growing mistrust on the part of the parties. We call on them to honour all their commitments under the agreements reached and to bring the peace process back on track. In this connection we welcome the efforts of the United States Administration to bring the parties together once more.

I should like at this juncture to refer to the question of the United Nations sanctions imposed on Libya. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the League of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement, which represent the vast majority of States and peoples of the world, have been calling for some years now for the sanctions on Libya to be lifted. Our call for dialogue and negotiations that could lead to an acceptable solution of the dispute between Libya and the three permanent members of the Security Council, as well as proposals for a fair trial of the two suspects in The Hague, by Scottish judges and under Scottish law, have not elicited the expected response. Let it not be construed that our calls are based merely on sentimental considerations of regional solidarity. After careful examination of the facts as made known to the international community, and with due respect for the tenets of international law, we think that the three States concerned need to reciprocate the flexibility shown by the Libyan authorities and help to bring to a close an issue that has unjustifiably caused untold suffering to the innocent people of Libya. Issues of this nature justify our support for the establishment of an international criminal court for the promotion and maintenance of international criminal justice on a fair and equitable basis.

The relics of the cold war in international relations remain particularly on the Korean peninsula and in United States-Cuba relations. We believe that the four-party talks proposed to ease tension on the Korean peninsula should foster dialogue, understanding and cooperation among all the countries concerned and enhance the process aimed at the eventual unification of the two Koreas. With regard to United States-Cuba relations, we hope that the blockades and mutual exchanges of rhetoric will give way to a new era of dialogue and mutual respect, in tune with current trends in international relations.

As has been eloquently stated by the Secretary-General in his Agenda for Peace, there can be no development without peace, just as there can be no peace without development. We are convinced that we need to pursue development as a means of preventing most of the conflicts, tragedies and humanitarian disasters that confront the world today. We are enjoined under the Charter of the United Nations to

> "employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples".

The need for concerted international action to restructure the international economy; construct a new regime to guide trade, aid and resource flows; and address the problems posed by environmental degradation, population explosion, the debt overhang, abject poverty and disease in developing countries, cannot be overemphasized. Such measures would redress the existing global economic inequalities and eradicate poverty in a way that will engender the peace and security that we all so dearly need. As expected, the series of global conferences held recently under the auspices of the United Nations, which involved not only Governments but also non-governmental organizations, civil society, the media and the private sector, have raised awareness of and built consensus around a number of overarching issues concerning economic growth and sustainable development. The time has come to shift into implementation gear and invest the same political will and energy in the monitoring of the follow-up process. We want to safeguard the environment and the welfare of our children, eradicate poverty, ensure sustainable development, and mainstream gender concerns in all our activities at the national and international levels, so that women and men participate fully and equally in all spheres of life as we approach the new dawn.

It bears mentioning that Africa's socio-economic difficulties are further compounded by the twin processes of globalization and liberalization. Africa therefore needs the special attention of the international community to ensure that the profound economic and institutional reforms it is undertaking to create an enabling environment for development yield maximum benefit for its people. The launching of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa in March 1996, if fully implemented, would contribute meaningfully to this endeavour.

We are painfully aware that international financial support for Africa is insufficient and unreliable. It is therefore necessary for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Africa to focus on the enhancement and strengthening of Africa's subregional economic groupings, which will serve as building blocks for an African economic community. This in turn will ensure Africa's effective participation in the emerging global economic order that is increasingly being shaped by the forces of globalization and economic liberalization.

For our part, we in Ghana are coping, not without difficulty, with the challenges posed by these forces, including those that are concomitant with the structural adjustment programmes that we have pursued for well over a decade. Coupled with these are those other imperatives that come with the processes of democratization and good governance. Our democratically elected Government will present itself to the electorate on 7 December 1996 to seek a fresh mandate to continue with the policies that have ensured stability and development in our country in recent years.

The entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is a welcome development, and we fully appreciate the numerous efforts and various compromises that contributed immensely to putting into place the various organs of the International Seabed Authority. We hope that adequate resources will be made available to enable developing countries to utilize fully the benefits, and also discharge the responsibilities, deriving from the Convention.

The financial situation of our Organization remains precarious and a source of concern to my delegation. The crunch in the cash-flow situation has not changed for the better, principally because a number of countries, including some of the largest, are neither paying their contributions nor making good on their arrears. It is important for Member States to provide the United Nations system with the means and resources required to accomplish the tasks assigned to it. Support for the United Nations should manifest itself not only in an eagerness to restructure it to make it more effective, but also in the payment in full, on time and without conditions of assessed contributions, in order to promote the successful pursuit of the objectives of the Organization at a time of both challenge and opportunity. In addressing the cash-flow situation, we also wish to deplore the high degree of wastage and overlap in the system, especially during the start-up and liquidation phases of peacekeeping operations as well as in the proliferation of mandates. With the consolidation of the internal oversight mechanisms into the Office of Internal Oversight Services, coupled with the existing external oversight mechanisms, it is hoped that the financial functioning of the Organization will be more cost-effective.

I should like to conclude by reaffirming my delegation's support for the reforms currently being pursued by the United Nations. In our view, the reforms in the financial administration of the Organization, the revitalization of its economic and social structures, the strengthening of the General Assembly and the Secretariat, and the restructuring of the Security Council all should contribute to a better functioning United Nations suited for the challenges ahead of us as we enter the new millennium.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.

United Nations

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General Assembly
Fifty-first Session

Official Records

24th plenary meeting
Monday, 7 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: The first speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Communities of Cape Verde, His Excellency Mr. Amilcar Spencer Lopes, on whom I now call.

Mr. Lopes (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): It is with great pleasure that I convey to you, Mr. President, my congratulations on your election to guide the work of this session of the General Assembly. At the same time I extend congratulations to the country that you represent with such distinction. Your outstanding qualities guarantee a competent presidency, which will certainly contribute to the success of our work.

I should also like to express my special appreciation for the enlightened and committed leadership of your predecessor, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, who, in the course of the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly, made an undeniable contribution to the continued progress of the United Nations.

I also take this opportunity to express the highest appreciation of my delegation for the vision, initiative and determination that have characterized the work of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his pursuit of the noble objectives of our Organization. It is with pleasure that I reiterate here the support of my country for his re-election.

Cape Verde, being a small developing country that is particularly affected by drought and desertification, and without any means of defence, has every reason to place a great deal of hope in the success of the United Nations, particularly with respect to the fulfilment of the principles and the goals of its Charter, such as the promotion of peace and security, social and economic development, the protection and defence of the environment, human rights and international law.

But small countries are not the only ones looking to the United Nations with hope. In today's world, when interdependencies are increasing and globalization is spreading to a growing number of sectors of humankind's activity, the existence and the work of our Organization is becoming more and more indispensable to all nations of the globe.

Governments are, in fact, more clearly aware of the need for international forums in which, through accommodation, they can reach consensus and decide on global policies, strategies and actions that, increasingly, are in the interests of the whole planet.

However, no institution apart from the United Nations has the vocation or the capacity to respond to those needs, since, to a large extent, it is the architect of the international stage on which we are players today.

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Under the auspices of the United Nations many results have been achieved in the search for solutions to the problems that afflict humankind. Spectacular progress has allowed human beings to take giant steps in science and technology. Nevertheless, there are still huge challenges to overcome, so that the ideals of the founders of the United Nations may triumph all over the face of the Earth.

In reality, for many people peace is still a dream, and promises of the distribution of the dividends from the end of the cold war have become an illusion. Malnutrition, disease, illiteracy — the eternal partners of underdevelopment — still overpower nations, preventing them from developing to their full potential to the benefit of their populations. Similarly, in many countries human rights are flagrantly violated, women are marginalized, and children fall victim to maltreatment and exploitation. In other countries, ethnic groups are subject to persecution and systematic "cleansing".

At the same time, situations of tension, such as arms and drug trafficking, the internationalization of organized crime and an upsurge in terrorism, are becoming generalized.

But it is necessary to bear in mind that such phenomena, both because of their origin and impact, can be fought efficiently only if there is a firm, unequivocal commitment by all States to improve international cooperation and better utilize resources within the framework of the United Nations.

Cape Verde, due to its proximity to the Sahara desert, is particularly affected by ecological problems, since, like other countries of the Sahel, it faces continuous environmental degradation, which threatens the very survival of its population.

It is therefore natural for us to welcome with joy the adoption and entry into force of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, in particular its Regional Implementation Annex for Africa. The particular attention paid to Africa is clearly justified. This continent is, without the shadow of a doubt, the most affected by drought and the most threatened by the advance of desertification. The ecological balance of the African continent, one fourth of the area of the planet, is crucial to stabilize the environment as a whole.

For that reason, the efforts that need to be made to prevent the desert from spreading must be shared by the entire international community.

Cape Verde is therefore committed, together with other countries, to establishing an international mechanism with the aim of facilitating the implementation and financing of the projects and programmes of the aforementioned Convention. We stress the praiseworthy action, at the subregional level, of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel in coordinating efforts to fight drought and desertification.

I should also like to underline the significant efforts made in this area at the national level in Cape Verde. The reforestation programme launched in the first years of my country's independence continues with the same vigour 20 years later, and the results achieved are encouraging. Since the programme was launched, the area covered has gone from 7,413 to nearly 181,275 acres. I must also highlight the major support given by Cape Verde's development partners, without which it would not be possible to maintain the reforestation programme at its current pace, which is satisfactory to all.

In spite of the success of this programme and of the efforts made, my country is still affected by the devastating consequences of drought. In fact, due to the lack of rainfall in July and the insufficient rain last August and September, Cape Verde faces a year of crop failure, which, once again, has given rise to anxiety and distress among Cape Verde's farmers.

Therefore, my Government will be forced, once again, to make an unexpected effort to address the consequences of such a situation, which, of course, will have a negative impact on the development process.

We therefore urge international solidarity with the people and Government of Cape Verde to help our country overcome the current farming crisis and ensure employment in the rural areas.

The world is seeing the gap widen between industrialized countries and developing countries. Economic globalization and the development of information and communications technology highlight existing differences. Restrictive immigration policies, which are associated with the spread of racism and xenophobia, are gathering speed day by day, which is disturbing to us.

Meanwhile, developing countries and, in particular, the least developed, face the consequences of accelerated population growth, which has direct repercussions on unemployment.

The pursuit of full employment should be the top priority of social and economic policies aimed at bringing about development in order to provide all — men and women — with the chance to ensure that their means of subsistence are secure and long-lasting. Unfortunately, the international community is still reluctant to assume its responsibilities in such matters.

A heavy burden thus falls upon the developing countries — the task of recovering from the delays resulting from an economic order that has not been, and still is not, in their favour.

This burden is even heavier in view of the inexorable trend towards the reduction of financial flows to the least developed countries, both in official development assistance and foreign direct investment.

In this regard, the Agenda for Development, aimed at supporting those countries in their efforts for recovery, should make urgent demands with regard to international cooperation for development. It should, at the same time, reaffirm the right to development as a main concern of the international community. The Agenda for Development cannot be seen as a mere enunciation of principles, but should be taken as a true charter of social and economic goals, with the United Nations playing a key role in its promotion and materialization.

In order to prepare the United Nations for the challenges facing humankind as we approach the end of the century, we are committed to improving of the Organization by promoting and undertaking reforms with the aim of strengthening it and empowering it so that it is better able to fulfil the objectives of its Charter. There have been long and complex negotiations on the reform and restructuring of the United Nations system. This exercise has been characterized by its particular intensity and richness, aimed at adapting the institutions of our Organization to the new challenges that face humankind as we approach the end of the century.

But we are close to the time when decisions of the utmost importance to the future of the United Nations will have to be taken. They will have to correspond, with due balance, to the concerns of large and small countries. What will certainly not be acceptable is a situation in which reforms end up maintaining the differences that already exist today. We support the idea that reforms should reflect the deep changes that have taken place in the 50 years since the creation of the United Nations. There must be fair representation for all regions of the world in the decision-making bodies of the United Nations, particularly in the Security Council. In this regard, we recognize the need for Africa to be duly represented, namely with African countries as permanent members of the Council.

We have all witnessed the successes, however relative, of the difficult talks on nuclear disarmament, in particular the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the very recent adoption by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which I had the honour and pleasure to sign on behalf of my country on 2 October 1996. We believe that these two documents provide a historic opportunity and a powerful impetus for the creation of conditions that will allow us to look with hope to the possibility, one day, of a world free of all nuclear weapons and of the nightmare of their use. The process of nuclear disarmament should, from now on, gain greater attention and follow-up.

The signature in Cairo, on 11 April, of the Pelindaba Treaty, which is the conclusion of joint efforts made by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations, marked the solemn pledge of the Governments and peoples of Africa to assume their share of the task of ridding the continent and the planet of nuclear weapons, in the same way as did the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean in 1967, and those of the South Pacific in 1985.

Cape Verde, which has consistently supported all efforts aimed at banning weapons of mass destruction, cannot but congratulate itself on the strengthening of international stability and security.

Expectations were therefore raised in respect of the planned fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We note that its mandate will be defined in the course of this session. We hope the special session will become a landmark in the creation of an atmosphere of relief and trust that will help us to reach the goal of eliminating weapons of mass destruction and reducing conventional armaments.

A combination of historical, political, economic and climatic factors, among others, have given Africa the lowest level of development of any continent over the past three decades. Social and economic indicators are still negative, as are Africa's prospects for the future. Approximately 50 per cent of the population of our continent lives in a state of absolute poverty and that percentage will surely increase if quick and efficient solutions are not found to resolve this crisis. At the same time, as cause and consequence of this appalling scenario, we have witnessed a succession of bloody conflicts, bringing even greater poverty, disease and the degradation or even destruction of the environment.

For this reason, so many important resources and capabilities that are essential to assessing and resolving the complex issues of development are being wasted and, very often, forever lost on the battlefields.

But it is not only the countries directly involved in such conflicts that suffer the consequences. The tension brought about by the presence of armed groups across the borders of other States, the tragedy of refugees and displaced persons seeking shelter in neighbouring countries and very often the consequent destruction of the environment, the spread of disease, the degeneration of moral values, the horror of suffering and behaviours far removed from human values are all situations not confined to the territorial limits of the States where conflicts occur.

It is therefore with deep sorrow that we witness the never-ending armed conflicts on our continent, despite the efforts of both the African and the international communities to put an end to them. Even when the parties involved seem to have reached an agreement for the re-establishment of peace, there are unjustified reversals that jeopardize the entire process.

An example of this is the conflict that still exists in Angola, a country with which Cape Verde has deep ties not only of history and culture, but also of solidarity. We support the efforts of the Angolan Government and the international community to undertake all tasks aimed at bringing about a lasting peace, social stability and the normal functioning of institutions at the national level, without which the Angolan people will be unable to enjoy the tranquillity they rightfully deserve and the wealth they could and should benefit from, given the huge potential of their country.

The need for joint action to end the nightmare of war in several regions of the African continent is becoming more and more urgent. The creation of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution was a far-sighted decision giving our continent the autonomous ability to help resolve situations of violence and tension.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that, in keeping with the principles that are at the foundation of that Mechanism, its main aim is anticipation and prevention of conflicts. Peacekeeping and security in the world remain the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council, though there may be a justification in some situations for the involvement of the OAU in specific peacekeeping and observer missions.

Addressing the causes of the conflicts, however, remains the most important issue. These causes are to be found essentially in the conditions of underdevelopment that persist in most of our countries. Such conditions nurture the seeds of violence and intolerance, are at the root of armed conflicts and block the establishment of structures to ensure democratic participation and its resulting human rights benefits. Key elements for the attainment of peace in Africa are therefore the promotion of lasting development, investment in human resources and ensuring that current processes of democratization are successful and widespread. It is imperative that such processes be duly supported so that they can consolidate and improve the living conditions of the population and stand up to possible *coups de force* or other such threats. The promotion and use of dialogue must be employed to resolve situations of civil strife and armed conflict.

In the light of the dimension and scale of the problem of development in Africa and questions of security, we agree with the argument that Africa is currently the major challenge facing the United Nations. Development, security and peace are major concerns in the minds of the leaders of the continent and of all others interested in the future of Africa. These goals are interrelated and cannot be achieved separately.

Of all the factors limiting the achievement of such objectives, the reduction of poverty is undoubtedly the one that must first be overcome through a strategy of sustainable development. Without this, the remaining economic and social goals cannot be achieved. The persistence of poverty is a constant threat not only to economic development, but also to the political and social stability of States and to the preservation of the environment.

Another fact to bear in mind is that solutions for the problems of development in Africa should be designed and managed on our own continent, thus making responsibility for Africa dependent on the development of the countries thereof. In this context, Africa is currently deeply committed to the search for internal and lasting solutions to its problems, which in no way suggests a rejection of the technological and financial resources and contributions that we believe the international community should continue to make available so that we can overcome the major difficulties we still face.

African countries are fully aware that they must take their destiny into their own hands and have been trying to implement measures that reflect their seriousness and hence worthiness to receive support in order to produce the expected results.

Several African countries have been undertaking institutional reforms with the aim of opening up their markets, reducing the role of the State in the economy and strengthening the private sector in order to make it credible and able to generate employment. Such reforms, combined with democracy and the development of civil society, tend to promote social and economic stability, thereby marshalling internal resources and encouraging foreign investment.

In this context, we must stress the importance of initiatives to promote greater foreign private investment, a source of employment and added value which is fundamental to ensuring the continuous and stable growth of African economies.

Another important initiative in which Africa is engaged is the African Economic Community, which received a decisive boost in May 1994 when the Abuja Treaty entered into force. As a first step in its implementation, the African countries are engaged in strengthening the regional integration of their economies through regional economic communities.

Last year, the Organization of African Unity adopted the Cairo Plan of Action to give new impetus to the economic and social development of Africa. Its objectives — responsible management, food security, development of human resources, the proper and effective use of natural resources, cooperation and economic regional integration — are ambitious but feasible. They depend upon the political will of Governments and their ability to marshal the internal means and external support to achieve these objectives. Mention should be made in this regard to the principles set out in the important decisions adopted or being prepared by the United Nations: the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the Agenda for Development.

The Cairo Plan of Action also recalls the need for the adoption of measures limiting the negative impact of the Uruguay Round agreements on the development of Africa in general and of the least developed countries in particular, and urges creditors to be prepared to assist in finding ways to reduce the debt burden, particularly as regards the current levels of debt servicing.

The recent mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda was an opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to measures aimed at adding new impetus to implementation, particularly as regards external debt, the diversification of African economies, greater access to markets and the transfer of technology. Africa sincerely hopes that that commitment, freely entered into by its partners, will be promptly fulfilled.

Although the current situation tends to raise very serious concerns, it is nonetheless possible to find encouraging signs pointing to positive developments in the situation on the African continent from the point of view of economic growth and the consolidation of democracy. And these are more than mere signs; some examples of clear successes already visible in Africa in recent years show that it is not heading exclusively towards chaos and destruction. It is necessary to find appropriate policies to manage these positive signs, policies which we must be courageous enough to implement. We are certain such actions will achieve results.

Although the signs are positive, they still do not reflect an irreversible trend. The burden of dependency resulting from past policies is still too heavy for Africa to reverse the situation on its own. Now more than ever, the international community, specialized agencies and the industrialized countries that are friends of Africa are called upon to strengthen financial and technical assistance to the continent so that underdevelopment can be definitively overcome.

In this regard, we congratulate certain countries on their willingness to maintain their levels of cooperation with Africa. Cape Verde is also pleased to note the efforts and generosity of certain partners, including some from the South, on behalf of the development of our country.

Cape Verde does not expect to be solely a beneficiary of the actions and initiatives of the United Nations. Despite its limitations and the fragility of its economy, my country wishes to contribute to the search for solutions to problems demanding our attention and to participate in those actions in which our presence is necessary.

Despite its brief history as an independent country, Cape Verde has several times had an opportunity to play a positive role in processes involving other countries, either contributing to the dialogue and understanding between the parties involved or through participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

It is the understanding of the Government of Cape Verde that, despite the structural difficulties it faces, it is duty-bound to contribute to the creation of a peaceful international environment and a partnership of solidarity that will allow all the nations of the world to benefit from mankind's scientific and technical achievements and to improve social management in order to guarantee each citizen internationally recognized basic rights associated with the values of freedom, democracy, development and well-being.

In this regard, we must recall here the suffering of the people of East Timor, deprived of the right to exercise self-determination and subjugated to a foreign military occupation for over 20 years. We note with admiration the resilience of the courageous Maubère people, who have lost so many of their sons to the cause of freedom. In this forum, where so much has been done to support the right of colonial peoples to decide their own destinies, we join our voice to those demanding the restitution of legality in that territory and that the Timorese people be given the full exercise of their rights, including the right to self-determination.

In this same context, we cannot remain indifferent to the recent events in the Middle East. They show clearly that there is no alternative to the peace process and that dialogue, tolerance and common sense must prevail over force, violence and intolerance, failing which the region could well be plunged anew into chaos and destruction, thus delaying once again the hope of its peoples to live in peace and security.

The eyes and hopes of mankind are turned to the United Nations. We are convinced that our Organization will emerge from this session with renewed strength and with new actions and initiatives that will enable us to look confidently to the challenges that the dawn of the third millennium holds for all Governments and peoples of the world.

The President: The next speaker is the Secretary of State for Foreign and Political Affairs of San Marino, His Excellency Mr. Gabriele Gatti.

Mr. Gatti (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation*): On behalf of the Republic of San Marino and my delegation, I wish, first of all, to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. This is a recognition of your competence and gifts as a diplomat and thus a guarantee of success for our activities.

At the same time, let me also thank your predecessor for the excellent way in which he guided the work of the fiftieth session, just concluded.

We are all aware that the United Nations rests upon a community of States. Similarly, we are all aware that the very existence and future of any State depends on the individuals who not only comprise it but also determine its life and shape its history.

The United Nations, therefore, must understand and meet the needs of all human beings if it is to represent the entire family of Member States, protect their interests and fulfil the legitimate expectations of the largest possible number of individuals.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Presently, humanity is confronted with the challenges of development versus underdevelopment, progress versus recession, wealth versus extreme and ever-increasing poverty. These phenomena affect less-favoured and socially advanced countries alike, leading to social discrepancies and situations in which some manage to plan their own development, while others, deprived of job opportunities, fail.

Development issues are inextricably intertwined with the destiny of nations. They change the face of countries and peoples and exacerbate the pressures on the less-favoured and most populous regions of the world. This is a real and constant threat to peace.

In some cases, the situation is aggravated by the fragility or, even worse, lack of democratic institutions. Here, power is wielded as an end in itself and not as an instrument for achieving the common ideal. Societies and States tend to withdraw into themselves, their only concern being to retain their strength and power. Sometimes those who hold the power do not bother to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society, except when forced to preserve the necessary consensus.

Our Organization should spare no effort to help countries and peoples alike to redress the balance and remedy these errors.

The items on the agenda for discussion at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly are of paramount importance and deserve the utmost attention and impartial and thorough analysis, since they pertain, on the one hand, to the peaceful coexistence of peoples and, on the other, to the existence and the structure of the Organization itself. Ultimately, peace and coexistence depend on and are best governed by this institution.

All efforts must be pooled to improve, update and render the United Nations more effective. This objective can be achieved through a reform of the system inspired by equality, justice and wider democracy and aimed at ensuring broader participation and the fair sharing of duties and powers among all Member States.

San Marino pledges itself to fulfilling the tasks derived from its United Nations membership, while benefitting from the opportunity to participate actively and make its contribution to the various bodies of the United Nations.

Undoubtedly, the strengthening and enhancing of the United Nations require a review of the composition, role, functioning and powers of the Security Council. This review process, however, is proceeding very slowly and at times reveals inadequate understanding, cooperation and acceptance of the views of others.

We are convinced that the Security Council must adjust to the changes brought about by historical events and, consequently, to the expanded membership of the United Nations itself, whose character and essence are clearly becoming increasingly universal. San Marino believes that the Security Council must increase its membership, since, as it stands today, it no longer reflects the world's reality, nor does it promote a rotating system in which all States, irrespective of their size, are equally represented and can participate and make their own contributions.

As regards the decision-making process of the Security Council, we believe that the maintenance, exercise and potential extension of the right of veto must be carefully reconsidered. Fortunately, we are living in an era characterized by dialogue, debate, discussion, proposals and the search for joint solutions. These are the instruments which we should resort to, rather than the right of veto. Over 50 years of activity and progress allow and entitle us to reconsider other instruments that, having proved useful in dealing with initial difficulties and tragic situations, are no longer necessary for further growth and consolidation.

Lastly, special attention should be paid to the development and interpretation of the Security Council's rules of procedure, with a view to adopting a more open attitude and a larger involvement of States in discussing the issues at stake. In this context, let me call on all Member States to intensify their efforts to find a universally acceptable solution.

Is this all mere utopia? If it is, then we must not forget that those who have committed themselves to serving their countries and the international community have a duty to translate this utopia rationally into a political design, without neglecting or ignoring other people's expectations. Only in this way will that utopia become a real political design based on the principles of responsibility, equality and justice.

I wish to express the deepest satisfaction of the Government of the Republic of San Marino at the adoption of the resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which my country cosponsored. Today, I have the honour of signing this Treaty on behalf of my country. We hope that all States will become loyal Parties to the Treaty and cooperate in the elimination of nuclear energy for non-peaceful uses, so that future generations may inherit an environmentally sound planet.

Given its geographical location in Europe, San Marino is particularly attentive to the evolution of the peace process in the Mediterranean area, especially in the Middle East, where the earlier general enthusiasm has been overshadowed by disenchantment and frequent difficulties. Fortunately, hope, however weak and volatile, is still alive. The Middle East still needs the international community's commitment and encouragement to proceed to a peaceful settlement of long-standing and more recent disputes that are the cause of division and uncertainty.

In the speech I delivered at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, I stressed, on behalf of the Government of San Marino, the need to reconsider the instrument of the embargo, its effectiveness and repercussions, especially in those cases where, in the absence of armed conflict, international isolation alone has proved a valid moral and political means of international pressure. In this regard, it is with satisfaction that I note that the elimination of coercive economic measures as a means of political compulsion has been placed on this session's agenda. The Government of the Republic of San Marino is confident that the debate will lead to a proper examination and resolution of the problem, so that innocent people who are already suffering are no longer the main targets of these measures.

The Republic of San Marino firmly believes that the United Nations, like the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, must remain the most appropriate forum for producing concrete results and enhancing the mechanism of fruitful dialogue and the exchange of ideas. The most daunting challenge is still that of preserving future generations from the scourge of war by reaffirming human dignity and promoting free and equitable social progress.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Jordan, His Excellency Mr. Khaled Madadha.

Mr. Madadha (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Permit me at the outset, Sir, to extend warm congratulations to Mr. Razali on the confidence shown in him by the international community in electing him President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes to him and to the other members of the Bureau for success in directing the meetings of this session and in all endeavours to strengthen our Organization and promote peace in our world. I also congratulate Mr. Razali's friendly country, Malaysia.

I also take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, and the former members of the Bureau for their effective stewardship of the fiftieth session.

I also wish to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the dedicated efforts he has sincerely and honestly made to advance the Organization and to promote its humanitarian mission of settling disputes between States by peaceful means. In conformity with the decision of the League of Arab States, Jordan supports the extension of the Secretary-General's mandate for another term, in order to enable him to pursue his mission and efforts in the service of international peace and security and the reforms he has initiated in the organs and Secretariat of the Organization.

The role of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the protection of international peace and security and in enhancing and directing the world economy towards liberalization and integration are among the main reasons for my country's devotion to the Organization and adherence to its Charter. In view of this, and out of our sense of responsibility and concern for the efficiency and relevance of the Organization, we appeal to all Member States to continue to support it, to fulfil their obligations to it consistently and to work to resolve its financial crisis.

I assert my country's firm position on the need to implement the necessary administrative reforms and restructure the Security Council. The structure of the Council no longer reflects the current balance of power. Any expansion of the permanent membership of the Council should take into account the increase in the number of developing countries and the growing economic power of certain industrial nations, such as Germany and Japan. We have seen many plans and proposals on this matter which the Security Council should carefully consider, such as the Italian plan. A review of the veto power enjoyed by the permanent members should reflect the democracy and transparency we seek.

In this context, I must emphasize the need to review the question of economic sanctions, which neither distinguish between a political entity and its innocent unarmed civilian population, nor provide compensation to third States adversely affected by such sanctions. We must work together to create a durable formula. We also call for opening the membership of the United Nations to all peace-loving States, as stipulated in Article 4.1 of the Charter.

This international Organization has made worthy peacekeeping efforts in many countries. It has made human sacrifices that would be unfair and unwise to ignore. Jordan is very proud to have been among the first countries participating in the peacekeeping forces in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere. In this regard, my country's effective participation in the Implementation

Force's peacekeeping and peacemaking operation in Bosnia is noteworthy.

In this regard, the fraternal people of Bosnia must be congratulated on the Dayton Agreement and on the elections it has held. A special tribute should be paid to President Alija Izetbegović for winning the presidential election. We are ready, along with other peace-loving countries, to help the people of Bosnia make the new democratic experiment a success, consolidate and rebuild the federal State and promote its reconstruction, development, sovereignty and stability.

Before I move on to another international issue, I would like to congratulate the United Nations on opening the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty for signature. My country is proud to have been among the first countries to sponsor the draft resolution under which this Treaty was adopted and to have signed it. We hope that steps towards nuclear disarmament will continue and will encompass the Middle East region. We hope that negotiations will begin for the conclusion of a treaty in the very near future banning the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear and otherwise, so that a nuclear-weapon-free zone may be established in the Middle East.

The peoples of our region have suffered the agonies of devastating wars over the past five decades, wars which have caused the deaths of tens of thousands, destroyed basic infrastructures and brought the people of our countries bloodshed, pain, deprivation, poverty and instability. Due to the allocation of resources to the war machine and the terrible arms race, their economies have gone into recession.

Signs of hope, however, emerged for these people five years ago with the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991 and the subsequent bilateral and multilateral negotiations between Arabs and Israelis. Palestinian hopes were revived with the 1993 Oslo agreement. The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements that followed restored happiness and hope to millions of Palestinians, who saw in that agreement the beginning of the end of their pain, bloodshed and destroyed economy. They were newly optimistic about securing their right to self-determination within their own State, rebuilding their national economy, industry and infrastructure, which had been destroyed by wars, and the onset of peaceful trade relations with their neighbours in Jordan, Israel and other countries of the region. Hope was also rekindled by the peace treaty concluded between Jordan and Israel in October 1994 and the resulting bilateral agreements on the establishment of diplomatic and economic relations, bilateral and regional cooperation, the reconstruction of the region and the establishment of strong trade and economic relations between the two countries, to the benefit of their peoples and other peoples in the region, opening the way to comprehensive regional cooperation.

Concrete progress was also made on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli peace tracks. There were prospects for a Syrian-Israeli agreement based on the "land-for-peace" principle, providing for full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan in return for a peace agreement ending the state of war and paving the way for peaceful relations based on strong foundations of understanding and normal, peaceful coexistence.

Current events and negative factors and measures in the occupied Arab territories — a return to the settlement-building policy; the violation of the sanctity of the holy places; the closure of the territories; the denial of work opportunities; the refusal to implement the agreements signed on the Palestinian-Israeli track; the postponement and impediment of self-government negotiations; the unilateral determination of the status of Jerusalem and of the self-government negotiations; the refusal to resume negotiations, suspended seven months ago, with Syria and Lebanon; and the refusal to return to the terms of reference and framework of the Madrid Peace Conference — have given rise to frustration among the peoples of the region, who are beginning to lose the rekindled hope to which I have referred.

Despite the excessively negative slogans against peace used by the new Israeli Government during the electoral campaign, we in Jordan — the King, the leadership and the people — welcomed the new Administration and the newly-elected Prime Minister out of respect for the free will of the Israeli people and non-interference in their internal affairs. We called for the continuation of the comprehensive peace process in the region and pledged to utilize the peace treaty with Israel to establish such a comprehensive peace. We urged our neighbours, Syria and Lebanon, to deal with the new realities and the new Israeli Government positively and realistically. Our motto and position at the Arab Summit Conference held at Cairo last June was a call to extend more time and opportunity to the new Israeli Government to return to the peace process on the bases agreed upon at the Madrid Peace Conference: the "land-for-peace" formula and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

All the participants in the Madrid Peace Conference had believed that the success achieved on the Palestinian-Israeli track and the Jordanian-Israeli track had opened to the peoples of the region, including the Israeli people, the door to a new life and a better future based on the principles of justice, peace for all, peaceful relations and trade. They had also believed that this success proved once again how misguided and wrong are obsolete principles such as that of achieving security through force and thus through the imposition of forced solutions. It also debunked the principle of occupying other people's land by force to ensure one's own security. Indeed, it has become clear that security can be ensured only through dialogue, peaceful coexistence, negotiations, mutual respect among peoples and free economic and trade relations, rather than through power politics and the imposition of forced solutions. Yet once again we are hearing certain nervous calls to revive the obsolete theory of security and the imposition of solutions by force.

Amid the gloom that has begun to enshroud the peace process, there is still a ray of hope. It is up to us, both Arabs and Israelis, to keep it shining with a view to securing a better future for our children and our grandchildren. For if, God forbid, we allowed this hope to become lost, a renewed cycle of violence, instability, tension, terrorism and extremism would prevail in the region, as shown by the recent bloody violence.

At the Cairo summit, all Arab Governments expressed for the first time their collective support and blessings for the peace process and proclaimed that peace is an irreversible strategic option. We have heard similar pledges from the new Israeli Government. It is our sincere hope that the United States and Russian co-sponsors of the peace process will intervene, and that international efforts will be made to put the peace process back on track, restore its previous vigour and impetus and put an end to all the obstacles that might impede or disrupt it.

The war and destruction in the region and the peace process that followed it have been described as a series of missed opportunities; for in the past all of us have missed invaluable opportunities for peace. Now here we are again, about to return to that insane policy. By challenging the opponents of peace, President Arafat and the Palestinian leadership have demonstrated a serious and unambiguous desire to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. It is not wise to reward him by embarrassing him before the Palestinian people and placing him in an unenviable situation vis-à-vis the opponents of peace, who are betting on the failure of his policies and the failure of the peace process.

Nor is it prudent to stipulate that Syria and Lebanon must return to the negotiating table without preconditions, as though the Madrid Conference and the painstaking and tough negotiations that followed had never taken place. Does this condition itself not constitute a precondition for the peace process? We all declared our intention to nurture the magnificent baby born at the Madrid Conference, whom we named "the peace process". But then, we disagreed on the method to be followed in the baby's upbringing. Let us return to working together, so as not to kill the baby in its cradle and along with it our peoples' chances for the better life which shone on the horizon after decades of death and destruction.

One of the most important factors for the credibility of the Middle East peace process is the improvement in the living conditions of the population through increased investment which has resulted in lowering the high unemployment rate. We in Jordan have taken numerous measures, enacted legislation and concluded agreements with a view to protecting and promoting investment. I regret that despite these reassuring measures and guarantees and the convening of two international economic summit conferences — in Casablanca in 1994 and in Amman in 1995 — the real outcome in terms of investment in the region has been disappointing. Apart from the increase in tourism that we noticed following the signing of the peace treaty, foreign industrial investment remains very low notwithstanding the many profitable projects put forward at the recent Amman economic conference.

While private foreign companies may have an excuse for reluctance to invest, because of fears related to the regime's history and political situation, the Governments of developed industrial countries have no excuse for their failure to provide their insurance companies with sufficient guarantees against investment risks to encourage companies to increase their investments. This is particularly true since the increased profitability of these companies' investment projects and the resulting higher incomes in the recipient developing countries would benefit the economies of the developed industrial countries as well. In this regard, we have high hopes for the successful conclusion of the fourth economic summit, to be held in Cairo next November. This will provide another opportunity for foreign investors to contribute to the region's development and to the consolidation of peace — quite apart from the benefits they and the economies of countries are bound to reap.

One of the region's biggest and most complex problems is that of Palestinian refugees; its settlement has been deferred to the final status negotiations. It is regrettable that the international community has not yet given this important political and humanitarian problem the attention, understanding and assistance it deserves. Every year we receive the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in which he describes the Agency's budget deficit and the consequent need to reduce the level of services provided to the refugees.

We urge the wealthy industrial States to give this matter their fullest attention and to increase their contribution in order to ensure the survival of this temporary solution to the major humanitarian problems that affect over 3.5 million Palestinian refugees, including some 1.5 million who live in Jordan. The Government of Jordan, despite its limited resources, is compelled to provide assistance and relief worth approximately $300 million annually. It is necessary to provide support for the Agency's budget to enable it to continue its work effectively, pending a final solution of the refugee problem on the basis of United Nations resolutions providing for their repatriation or compensation. As long as it remains without a substantive and effective solution, this problem will continue to constitute a time bomb — forgive me for using this term to indicate the magnitude of this problem — for the peace process, in view of its significant humanitarian and political dimensions.

The subject of peace in the Middle East leads us to demand speedy implementation of the recent agreement between Iraq and the United Nations for a partial lifting of the embargo on the sale of Iraqi oil in order to provide food and medicine to the brotherly people of Iraq, who have suffered, and continue to suffer, from the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq. These sanctions have punished them but have not affected their leaders. We call upon the Government of Iraq to implement United Nations resolutions; respect the sovereignty, independence and freedom of neighbouring States; cooperate with the United Nations Special Commission; cooperate in the release of Kuwaiti prisoners of war held in Iraq; respect human rights; and establish a democratic system in which the rights of all its communities are respected. At the same time, we call for the lifting of the economic sanctions that are punishing the people of Iraq. We also call for respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in its internal affairs. We reject any attempts aimed at dividing Iraq, such as the recently proposed "safe areas" scheme.

It is also our hope that the United Arab Emirates will be able to arrive at a peaceful solution enabling it to regain its three Gulf islands occupied by Iran. We call for non-interference in the internal affairs of Bahrain and extend our support to that sister country, at a time when it is the target of terrorism. We call upon Eritrea to find a peaceful solution to the question of its withdrawal from the Yemeni Huneish islands in response to Yemen's peaceful efforts, in order to maintain good-neighbourly relations and in gratitude for Yemen's assistance to Eritrea in attaining its independence and sovereignty.

We call for a just and speedy solution to the Lockerbie problem, and for a positive response to the initiatives and efforts of the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which would ensure the trial and punishment of the perpetrators of that heinous terrorist act without punishing all the people of Libya.

My country supports international efforts to combat international terrorism. Hence our active participation at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, held earlier this year at the invitation of our sister country, the Arab Republic of Egypt, to explore the most effective means of international cooperation in this regard. We also support the decisions of the latest summit meeting of the Group of Seven industrial Powers aimed at fighting terrorism and punishing its perpetrators, as terrorism has become a dangerous international phenomenon that has taken the lives of many innocent people, destroyed the infrastructure of many countries, disrupted tourism and the free movement of innocent people and defamed national liberation and independence movements. We therefore support bilateral, regional and international cooperation to combat this ugly and destructive phenomenon.

Today the world stands on the threshold of a new century, only three years away. That historic occasion must not pass without our pondering and studying the events of the twentieth century in preparation for the coming twenty-first century. We should benefit from the lessons we have learned and the events we have witnessed in order to make the next century a safer, more secure, stable and developed one for future generations. An idea worthy of exploration and careful examination in this regard is that of holding, at the outset of the new century, a special session of the General Assembly at the Heads of State level, to prepare for a new world order in whose shaping all States, large and small, developed and developing, would participate. This is only an idea which could be further elaborated and considered.

As the representative of a developing country, it concerns me that despite the great progress achieved in the areas of disarmament and the resolution of global security problems, there has been no resolution of the problem of the economic security of the developing States. The gap between the developed and developing countries in the areas of income and technology is growing. Small developing countries will not be able to find solutions in the foreseeable future to their heavy burden of persistent indebtedness. It is both disastrous and painful that many developing countries, such as my country, Jordan, give their full efforts to consolidate and develop their democratic systems, orient their economies towards privatization, reform their economic systems, redress their budgetary and balance-of-payment deficits, fully cooperate with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and make concrete strides in this respect, and yet find themselves, after their people have devoted all their resources, capabilities and productivity to servicing and repaying their burdensome debts, still striving breathlessly to catch up with the developed countries, without hope of soon ridding themselves of this burden. Therefore, the shaping of and preparation for any new world order to be developed must consider the important question of the economic security of the developing countries.

We now live in a world where distances between its various places and economic markets have been reduced due to tremendous technological strides in the areas of transport and communications. This means that the development and well-being of the developing countries is an important part of the solution to the recession in the developed countries. The idea of holding a special session of the General Assembly to prepare for a new world economic order could be the subject of a draft resolution which I hope will be brought before this Assembly for consideration.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Attorney General of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Her Excellency The Honourable Janet G. Bostwick, M.P.

Ms. Bostwick (Bahamas): The Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas warmly congratulates Ambassador Razali on his election to the presidency of this fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His skills as a distinguished diplomat are well known and, coupled with the cooperation of Member States, will create the requisite conditions for a successful Assembly. I wish to assure him of the full support of my delegation as he presides over the deliberations of this body.

I wish also to express my delegation's appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who effectively guided the work of a most historic and memorable fiftieth session. We wish also to thank the Secretary-General for his leadership of the Organization over the past year.

The Bahamas is indeed honoured to have been elected to serve as a Vice-President of the General Assembly at the fifty-first session. I wish to thank all Member States for their support in our realization of this achievement.

Our deliberations during the last session provided an opportune environment for stocktaking and evaluation, as well as the opportunity to look ahead and consider how we ought to proceed for the next 50 years. The solemn Declaration which we adopted at the end of the Special Commemorative Meeting, highlighted the international community's continued commitment to the United Nations and to the purposes and principles of the Charter by which it is governed. The Bahamas is convinced that the United Nations remains the primary world body with the capacity and political will to bring together the disparate elements of the international community, so as to face and deal with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Bahamas, like other countries, would wish to see a strong and effective United Nations. It is our view that the three-tiered reform process currently under way in the political, economic and social and administrative areas represents an important step in that direction. We must remain diligent and focused in our work so as to transform the United Nations into a structure equipped for the fulfilment and support of the myriad demands of Member States.

In the area of political reform, the Bahamas continues to support the enlargement of the Security Council to enable it to become more effective, representative, democratic and transparent. We are disappointed that after another year of discussion little or no progress has been made. We urge all Member States to exercise flexibility so as to expedite agreement on this important matter.

We acknowledge the need to strengthen the United Nations system in the economic and social fields. Action must be taken to reduce duplication and to improve coordination among the various agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions.

There is a clear need for reform and greater efficiency in the administrative and financial areas. The discussions in the respective high-level Working Groups established to examine these areas have been useful. However, few, if any, meaningful decisions have been taken to date. We urge Member States to increase the momentum, so as to put in place the requisite measures to strengthen the efficacy of the Organization. At the same time, the Bahamas urges and appeals to Member States to make a more determined effort to meet their financial obligations to the Organization. We are aware that the assessment system needs reform. Thus, we should take the opportunity provided by this session to agree on an equitable scale of assessment for the next triennium. The scale of assessment, when finalized, should take into account all relevant circumstances, including the special circumstances of archipelagic island developing countries and the need for the development of a vulnerability index. The Bahamas also wishes once again to urge the international community not to use high per capita gross national product (GNP) as the sole measurement of capacity to pay when it considers the question of criteria for the scale. The Bahamas, as well as a number of other countries, has repeatedly argued that high per capita GNP is not an accurate measurement of a country's wealth. Indeed, it presents a skewed and distorted picture of the economic reality in my own country when one takes into consideration the duplication of infrastructure and social services.

In our efforts to reform this Organization, we must guard against engaging in reform for reform's sake. The restoration of the dignity of the individual must remain our primary focus. The extent to which we neglect this highest of priorities is the extent to which human rights abuses and inequities will abound, giving rise to tensions and conflicts on various levels, like those that have been witnessed by the international community in recent years with the escalation of civil wars and ethnic strife in many parts of the world. A total breakdown in society is the ultimate consequence of such activities, which completely overwhelm national resources and consume inordinate amounts of international energy which could be far more meaningfully expended. To achieve meaningful reform we will have to change our focus significantly. It will require a shift in paradigms, where issues previously neglected will have to be brought to the fore.

We need to be reminded that economic and social security directly influence political security. They must therefore be addressed in an integrated manner. We must guard against the additional threat of economic might being translated into military power, which not only sidelines and marginalizes the disadvantaged and dispossessed but also threatens our peace and security.

Our efforts must be aimed at raising the standard of living and quality of life of the world's most underprivileged. Despite impressive economic growth in many countries, human development continues to move at a snail's pace, particularly in developing countries. We must find a way to balance economic growth and human development so as to ensure the sustainability and livelihood of future generations.

We are merely proposing for the international community what is already in place in the Bahamas. The promotion and protection of human rights, the advancement of women, social justice, equality and development continue to receive priority attention from the Government of the Bahamas. We are fully committed to securing a social environment in which our citizens can live in harmony, prosperity and security, without fear or intimidation. Many of the recommendations contained in the plans and programmes of action of the recent world conferences have already been implemented in the Bahamas, and we will continue to put in place the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the implementation of those recommendations which have not yet been put into practice.

Our past actions have brought us to a day of reckoning. The wealth of oceans once deemed inexhaustible has proven finite. Global warming is no longer a prognostication, but a present condition. What is at stake here is the future of our planet and the lives of its inhabitants. The Bahamas urges that the special session for the review of Agenda 21 in 1997 be viewed as an opportunity to re-examine our strategy and to correct past mistakes. The Bahamas hopes that the special session will focus on practical proposals and not try to renegotiate Agenda 21. Definitive priorities and a recommitment to sustainable development should be set out, taking account of the recognized peculiar problems of small developing States and the international community's commitment to provide resources to such States.

The Bahamas is concerned that protection be provided to the fragile and vulnerable economies of small States in a global community which is moving towards the strengthening and development of trading blocs. The new international trade regime has put small States at a disadvantage with the expectation that they liberalize their markets and open their borders in conformity with the obligations and commitments of the World Trade Organization. The playing field must be levelled so that due regard can be given to the fragile domestic economies of these States and their macroeconomic position. If the developed countries are demanding protection for their sensitive domestic industries, then similar demands by developing countries with respect to their domestic industry should not be viewed as a request that is unreasonable or inconsistent with current international trends.

A review of current events reveals new threats to the fragile peace process in the Middle East. The Bahamas urges the parties concerned to make every possible effort to restore order, to refrain from acts of violence and to reactivate the peace process, which enjoyed the widespread support of the international community. We commend President Clinton for his initiative in inviting Middle East leaders to Washington for discussion aimed at defusing this volatile situation and thus, hopefully, restoring confidence in the peace process.

Ongoing conflicts in Africa are of grave concern. The international community should see it as its duty to support measures for the prevention and resolution of conflict in the countries concerned and to address the economic and debt burdens that have crippled Africa. Although the African countries themselves have made strenuous efforts towards readjustment and recovery, they continue to require the assistance of the international community.

The Bahamas welcomes the approval by the Group of Seven of a debt-relief plan for the world's poorest nations. The debt-relief measure, which will release as many as 20 of the poorest countries from up to $7.7 billion in debt, will go a long way towards providing the needed relief for those countries in their economic growth and development.

The Bahamas is pleased to note that after four years of devastating warfare free elections have taken place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We note the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the question of Cyprus, and we urge the parties concerned to continue to seek a just and viable solution to that conflict. Violence perpetrated against the people of Cyprus cannot be condoned.

Notwithstanding the considerable and praiseworthy efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, Haiti still remains unstable to a degree that threatens the stability of the entire region, with a continuing outflow of immigrants seeking a better way of life in other countries. The majority of such immigrants retreat to the Bahamas.

It is regrettable that, notwithstanding the assistance of the international community, many areas of great concern remain to be effectively tackled in Haiti. Attempts to restore democracy are constantly hindered by the absence of the conditions necessary to support them. We are therefore left with a population surrounded by much activity, but one whose daily existence remains meagre at best. The consequences are predictable, namely, unrest and increased violence. It is therefore not sufficient to continue business as usual. The peculiar nature of the situation in Haiti requires specific, focused and targeted action that addresses causes and not effects, one in which initiatives provide direct benefits to the Haitian people.

The Bahamas views with much regret the continued escalation of the nefarious drug trade, particularly in the Latin American and Caribbean region. We must double our efforts to fight this terrible scourge, and it is our hope that the special session in 1998 will result in a renewed commitment to fight and eradicate this illicit activity.

We are also of the view that efforts must be renewed to address the problem of the traffic in small arms, which has increased to alarming proportions in recent times. We are particularly concerned about the large number of small arms that are smuggled into the Caribbean countries. We urge the countries that manufacture and sell arms to impose stricter arms control measures and provide assistance to vulnerable States to reduce this threat and increase the latters' capability to combat such illegal activity.

At the same time, the international community must voice unanimous disapproval and condemnation of the unrelenting increase in crime and the rise of terrorism that is currently confronting the international community. The Bahamas regrets the failure to reach international consensus on dealing swiftly with those grave areas of concern. We urge that every effort be made to implement the relevant agreements already in force and to put in place any additional measures required to deal with these reprehensible activities.

The proliferation of arms, both conventional and those designed for mass destruction, poses a serious threat to humanity. Thus, the Bahamas welcomed the recent adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and intends to add its name shortly to the growing list of signatories. Anti-personnel land-mines present an insidious challenge to development and human dignity, and we should move towards a complete ban on such treacherous tools of murder.

The Bahamas denounces the continued trans-shipment of nuclear material and hazardous waste through the ecosensitive Caribbean Sea. In this respect, the entire Caribbean Community is in agreement. Indeed in 1992, the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community declared that the Caribbean Sea should be a nuclear-free-zone for purposes of shipment, storing or dumping of any radioactive or hazardous substances or toxic waste.

The Bahamas is encouraged by the steps taken by the second regular session of the International Seabed Authority at its meeting at Kingston last August, which are geared towards ensuring the effective functioning of the Authority.

Among the issues before the General Assembly this session is the matter of the international criminal court. We exhort the General Assembly to continue its work on this item so as to enable the convening of a conference of plenipotentiaries in 1998 to adopt the statute of the court, thus fulfilling a lacuna in the existing international legal order.

As members are aware, the Bahamas is an archipelagic nation which, by any measure, is a small State with a population of less than 300,000. However, we are a proud people and strong in our belief in justice for all and in the inalienable rights of all people, as enshrined in the Charter of this noble Organization.

It is in this spirit of justice and fair play that over the past two years we have repeatedly recorded our support in the General Assembly for the efforts of the 21 million inhabitants of the Republic of China on Taiwan as they entreat the Organization to examine the merits of establishing a committee to analyse in depth the implications, both now and for the future, of continuing to preclude those 21 million souls from formal representation in the General Assembly by way of membership in the United Nations.

The Bahamas again calls on the nations of the world, as Members of this august and united international body of nations, to hear the plea of those 21 million souls on the island of Taiwan and to consider what is just and right for them as they too seek to avail themselves of the benefits of membership in the United Nations.

The next 50 years will be painful and exacting as we attempt to ensure that the pitfalls of the past are avoided. Many changes will be required. In effecting change, we must ensure that it is profitable, for while change is inevitable, progress is not. The tendency to hold onto the old way of doing business in the midst of necessary change will remain our greatest challenge. As we seek to balance our efforts, it must be remembered that transformation in one area does not necessarily relegate all others to irrelevance.

Many reasons have been proffered for the present state of affairs. Not surprisingly, none of them seem to involve the proponents. While everyone talks about the future, few are willing to make the necessary sacrifices to secure it. Rhetoric boils with urgency, but talks move slowly, and action is even more halting.

The uncharted waters ahead remain daunting, defined by bilious seas of unrelenting, sophisticated, transnational criminal activity, which is tearing at the very fabric of society. Environmental degradation has exposed the Earth to permanent damage. Navigation of these seas requires us to rise above platitudes and empty promises. We must repudiate the adversaries of peace.

Our evaluations during the past session confirmed the continuing validity of the United Nations as the principal mechanism for addressing world concerns. Despite its uneven accomplishments, the United Nations facilitates collaboration for the resolution of societal ills, whatever their origin. The structure and machinery of the United Nations must be such that we are encouraged to continue to use the relatively calm chambers of this forum for our deliberations. This is the only safeguard we have against countries' being tempted to take their disputes out to sea.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for External Relations of Sudan, Mr. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, on whom I now call.

Mr. Taha (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express to Mr. Razali Ismail our sincere congratulations on his election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His rich experience, wisdom and knowledge will definitely lead to the success of our deliberations, which are taking place in very delicate international circumstances. I assure him of the full support and assistance of my delegation in discharging his task successfully.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, for his successful efforts in leading the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

The international community had keenly hoped that the post-cold-war era would result in an end to the tensions that had characterized the international scene and to the arms race and armed conflicts. All nations, particularly those in the developing world, have aspirations to build a new world order whose cornerstone would be equality among States, non-interference in their internal affairs, transparency and respect for ideological, cultural and religious diversity.

Any observer of today's international scene would conclude that events are completely contrary to expectations. Tensions have escalated, and political, military and economic threats are on the increase. Apparently, equality among States of sovereignty, rights and obligations no longer exists. Moreover, the nuclear threat still lingers on, military conflicts have not ceased and ideological fanaticism and cultural hegemony have become the major features of the new world order.

The Sudan is of the view that the structure of the international community, which is based on ideological, political and cultural diversity and pluralism, prompts us all to accept peaceful coexistence and dictates that harmony and diversity among nations become the vehicle for interaction and dialogue within the framework of pursuing national interests in the context of the international system.

The nations of the world expect the United Nations to be a forum in which they can express their views and positions and an instrument for the continued pursuit of humanity's aspirations to freedom, prosperity, peace and security.

It is against that background that the call has sounded for the reform of the United Nations system. True and sincere adherence to the spirit and letter of the Charter of the United Nations, equality, respect for the sovereignty of Member States, non-interference in their internal affairs and respect for their right to choose are the bases for strengthening the United Nations and fostering its role, transparency and democratization, so that it may meet the enormous challenges of maintaining international peace and security and serving economic and social development.

I should like to point out that my country has followed with satisfaction the positive reforms that have been undertaken by the Secretary-General. The Sudan supports the position expressed by both the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity endorsing the re-election of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for a second term.

The Sudan also welcomes General Assembly resolution 50/227 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. On the other hand, it is imperative that a thorough review of the Security Council take place to ensure its democratization and to allow for equitable representation by the developing countries, including permanent membership. There is a strong need to review the work and procedures of the Security Council in order to achieve transparency and to enable all States to follow the formal and informal meetings of the Council. It is equally vital that the decision-making mechanism be corrected by establishing just criteria to guide its policies and distance it from selectivity and double standards. In this context, the veto concept must be reviewed and corrected so that the principle of equality among Member States stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations may become a reality.

Finally, the Security Council should discharge its political responsibilities without addressing legal issues, which fall within the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, as stipulated in the Charter and the Statute of the Court. The Court must be enhanced to enable it to shoulder its responsibilities in handling legal disputes among Member States.

In this connection, it is important to note the new trend towards the imposition of sanctions against some countries as a means of settling certain disputes, as has been witnessed recently. Such sanctions have adversely affected the people of those countries, particularly the vulnerable sectors of society, namely, women, children and the elderly, the very sectors that the United Nations has pledged to protect and develop. It is therefore necessary to reconsider the basis on which sanctions are imposed, the duration of such sanctions and the lifting of them when the requirements have been met or when their implications give rise to human suffering.

The ideal means for settling most recent conflicts is through strict compliance with the provisions for conflict resolution as stipulated in the Charter, the consolidation of cooperation among States, the encouragement of dialogue and the fostering of international public opinion through common understanding. Therefore, my country welcomes the endeavours designed to enhance preventive diplomacy and its mechanisms in order to achieve these goals.

I wish now to touch upon some important international issues. We look forward to the success of the ongoing efforts of the countries of West Africa, under the leadership of our sister country, Nigeria, to ensure that the people of Liberia are able to achieve stability. We also hope that the efforts to end the conflict in Angola will stop the bloodshed and steer the country towards development. We also call on the people of our sister country, Somalia, and the factions there, to rise above their differences in order to preserve independence and unity and resume their march towards prosperity and progress.

We also hope that Rwanda and Burundi will achieve stability, and that they will use diversity as an element of unity and strength. We call for the enhancement and support of the role of the Organization of African Unity in its efforts towards settlement of these conflicts. Africa, as the continent of the future, needs the support of the international community so that it can achieve political stability and economic development, and contribute to establishing a more just and stable international community.

As for the sanctions imposed on the Libyan people, we fully support the Libyan initiatives, which are also supported by the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity, to put an end to the conflict between Libya and three Western countries. My country appeals to the international community to exert greater efforts to reach a final settlement to this dispute and to alleviate the suffering of the Libyan people by ending the embargo to which they are subjected.

As for the Middle East, Sudan believes that peace should be built on the principles of justice and respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the Arab peoples in the region, and that peace must also be based on the commitments agreed to by the parties concerned. Any retreat from agreed obligations and commitments contradicts a real desire to achieve peace.

The irresponsible practices of the occupying Power will have serious repercussions for the peoples and countries of the region, and will have a negative effect on international peace and security. Therefore, Sudan calls for the immediate implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace on all tracks of the process. We draw the attention of the international community to the precarious situation in the region, the consequences of continued failure and the increasing possibilities of confrontation, which make it necessary for the international community to be vigilant, dynamic and strict in implementing justice and the rule of law so as to save the region from the potential scourge of war.

With regard to the Gulf region, we look forward to the restoration of the peace and security that it enjoyed before to the war. The Sudan would like to reiterate the importance of compliance with Security Council resolutions regarding the sovereignty and legitimate rights to existence of Kuwait, and the rights of its people and leadership with regard to security and stability. Similarly, we reiterate the right of Iraq to sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. We call upon the international community to lift the sanctions imposed on Iraq, which are causing suffering and starvation for the Iraqi people, and, in this respect, we call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995).

With regard to Europe, my country expresses its satisfaction with the signing of the Dayton Agreement, aimed at ending the suffering of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For several years their suffering caused anguish in the conscience of the international community. We also express our heartfelt congratulations to President Alija Izetbegović for gaining the people's confidence in his leadership. We call upon the United Nations to work for the full implementation of the Dayton Agreement, in particular the prosecution of Serb leaders responsible for the crimes of genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and other violations of international law. We also call on the international community to provide the necessary assistance and resources for the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With regard to Asia, we express our satisfaction with the agreement reached between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front, which reflects the wisdom of both parties. In this context, we commend the efforts of President Soeharto of Indonesia and his Foreign Minister, which culminated in the agreement.

Social and economic development is the primary requisite for political stability to deter the scourge of wars and conflicts. In this respect we express the deep concern of Africa, which calls for justice, an end to its marginalization, and compensation for all the injustices inflicted on it during the colonial era and for the inequities of the international economic order.

The majority of the least developed countries are in Africa, and they need support and assistance. The debts of African countries, which exceed $300 billion, have become the main impediment to the ambitions of the continent to achieve development and to ensure the prosperity of its peoples. In most African countries debt-servicing costs exceed the gross national product and total export earnings.

The African countries have welcomed the World Bank initiative to reduce the debt burden of the least developed countries. Sudan believes that the effective solution of the debt crisis requires agreement on a unified strategy, with the aim of cancelling or reducing debts for all those countries, without exception. We also call on the international community to provide the necessary financial support for the Secretary-General's Initiative for development in Africa.

The mid-term reviews of the Paris Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s and of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s have shown that pledges should be followed by action, not by more promises.

In the field of food security and the prevention of famine, which are issues of primary concern to Africa and the rest of the world, my country places high hopes on the forthcoming World Food Summit, which will take place at Rome in November 1996, which will seek solutions for the problem of food security throughout the world. Sudan, which is perceived to be one of the countries with the potential to play a considerable role in the production of food, is ready to shoulder its responsibility, together with a serious contribution from the international community towards that end.

Human rights issues have priority on the agenda of the United Nations. They receive the full support of my country, based on our conviction that human beings are the only creatures that have been honoured and given responsibility by Almighty God, and on our commitment to human rights covenants.

However, we disagree with the growing tendency to exploit human rights issues to serve the political interests of certain circles, in a manner that jeopardizes the principles of human rights. Selectivity does not serve the cause of human rights as well as objectivity and comprehensiveness; confrontation and condemnation do not support human rights as well as cooperation, conviction and encouragement.

In line with this understanding, my country has established the Advisory Council for Human Rights, to protect human rights and investigate all accusations and complaints in this regard. The Sudan also resumed its cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on human rights after the causes of our withdrawal of cooperation had been removed. We reiterate here our commitment to cooperation on this matter, in accordance with the principles of objectivity, transparency and respect for cultural diversity and pluralism. This last principle prompts me to refer to the attack on Islam, which portrays it as barbaric and links it to terrorism. These malicious allegations are unjust; Islam is completely innocent. They contravene the principle of respect for all religions without exception. Wrong practices do not constitute evidence to justify negative judgements on the religious beliefs of those who perpetrate them. Such trends make all religions and philosophies susceptible to condemnation, regardless of their sources or origins.

Islam is the religion of tolerance and coexistence. We therefore call upon the international community to stop this ferocious campaign targeting Islam, and call upon the United Nations to distance itself from it. We hope that the positive positions of a number of Western leaders towards Islam will be echoed by the communities in the West, their mass media and their justice systems.

I deem it necessary, in addressing the Assembly, to shed light on some important political developments in my country. I hope members will listen attentively to what I am about to say and will open their hearts while I touch on the circumstances that surrounded the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1044 (1996), 1054 (1996) and 1070 (1996), respectively, against my country.

First, it has been proven that 11 Egyptians were the organizers and perpetrators of the attempt that was the subject of these resolutions.

Second, prior to the incident the suspects had been moving in a number of Arab, African and Asian countries. The Sudan was but one of these countries.

Third, the Security Council has based its resolutions on the statement of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, which called upon the Sudan to look for, locate and extradite the suspects if — and I underline if — they were found in the Sudan. This was stipulated in the Mechanism's decision of 19 December 1995.

Fourth, those resolutions were based on the assumption that the three suspects, who are Egyptians, were in the Sudan at the time the other members of the group entered Addis Ababa from other countries, several months before the incident.

Fifth — and this I would underline — no evidence was produced to prove that the suspects were in the Sudan at the time the incident took place or at the time the Sudan was asked to hand over the suspects, which request was received more than a month after the incident.

Sixth, a secret trial was conducted for the three suspects, who were sentenced to death. Concerned States and observers were never allowed to witness the trial.

Seventh, the Sudan has unequivocally condemned this incident since day one, and it has expressed its readiness to cooperate with the concerned parties.

Eighth, the Sudan received the first request to arrest the suspects 32 days after the incident. The request did not provide sufficient information about the suspects.

Ninth, the competent Sudanese authorities conducted exhaustive and complete investigations, but these did not yield any information or prove the presence of the suspects on Sudanese territory.

Tenth, though the Sudan has time and again requested the cooperation of concerned countries and of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) in this regard, its efforts have been in vain.

Eleventh, it has been proven that the first suspect is in Afghanistan. An official document confirming that fact was submitted to the Security Council by the Afghan Government. Moreover, in statements to the press, the first suspect claimed full responsibility for the incident and confirmed that he has not entered the Sudan since 1994.

Twelfth, the Sudan reiterates its full readiness to cooperate with all parties concerned, and it emphasizes that all available evidence indicates that the suspects are not present on Sudanese territory.

To insist on imposing sanctions on the Sudan defies logic and justice. This must be reconsidered in order to redress the injustice inflicted on my country and to alleviate the negative impact of this recurrent series of sanctions, which could cause massive human suffering to innocent people.

As we stated before the Assembly last year, we reiterate our condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We reaffirm our readiness to cooperate and to participate effectively in efforts to combat terrorism. We are actively involved in this matter at regional levels, in particular within the framework of the League of Arab States. We reiterate our commitment to contribute to the establishment of more secure, stable and just international relations.

The Sudan has witnessed a number of internal political developments this year. Parliamentary elections were held, followed by a presidential election by direct balloting. All Sudanese citizens exercised their democratic right in a free and fair election monitored by representatives of friendly countries and international and regional bodies.

The genuine efforts my Government has exerted tirelessly in recent years have culminated in the signing of a political charter between the Government and two important rebel factions. In response to the signing of the political charter, other rebel factions joined the peace process, most recently the SPLA, the Popular Movement for Peace and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of the Sudan.

While our charter affirms that shariah and are the main sources of legislation in the country, it allows States to promulgate complementary legislation compatible with their needs. We in the Sudan recognize cultural diversity. In accordance with our charter, freedom of religious belief and the prohibition of forceful conversion to any religion or faith are fully granted. We also recognize pluralism. Accordingly, we guarantee the right to religion and belief. No one can be forced to accept any religious belief.

The Charter ensures the fair distribution of resources and power-sharing among citizens. It also calls for the establishment of a coordination council for the southern states in order to contribute to the implementation of the provisions stipulating the holding of a comprehensive referendum among the citizens of southern Sudan after an interim period, the length of which has yet to be negotiated.

Relentless efforts are being made in order to reach a settlement with the faction that has thus far remained outside of the peace process. Consultations and coordination are currently under way with the concerned parties, in particular with the countries of the region represented in the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD).

The Sudan welcomes and appreciates the contribution by friendly countries towards our sincere and genuine search for lasting peace in our country. I am pleased to inform members of the Khartoum agreement, signed between the Sudan and Uganda through the kind and much appreciated mediation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This agreement was further strengthened by the conclusion in Tehran last week of an agreement on a verification mechanism for the implementation of the agreement, with the participation of Iran and Malawi.

At this juncture, as I speak of Sudan's greatest and most urgent priority — peace — I wish to pay tribute to the intensive intellectual efforts being exerted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), within its specific mandate in the United Nations system and by all ways and means available to it, to establish a culture of peace. This is based on the construction in the minds of men in defence of peace, as stipulated in the preamble of UNESCO's statute.

My Government has fully cooperated with UNESCO in the promotion of the noble objectives of this programme. We did so notably through our contribution to the 1995 Barcelona conference and to the follow-up seminar in the Netherlands in May 1996. We sincerely hope that such dialogue will continue, with a view to creating an environment conducive to achieving a comprehensive peace.

For more than three decades, my country has hosted over a million refugees from neighbouring countries as a result of the unstable security situation in those countries. We have provided them security and stability as well as educational, health and other essential services. In the framework of solving the refugee problem through voluntary repatriation, the Sudan has cooperated with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other concerned countries, and has signed tripartite agreements for the repatriation of the refugees from some of those countries. We hope to reach similar agreements concerning the rest of the refugees, thus guaranteeing their repatriation in dignity.

We call upon the international community to share this burden with the Government of the Sudan. As the Sudan is experiencing severe economic difficulties, the resources allocated to refugee programmes have diminished considerably. This has resulted in severe pressures on Sudan's public sector, since the refugees share food and services with Sudanese citizens.

Aware of its responsibilities towards its people, the Sudan has sought to deliver food and other relief assistance to its war-affected populations throughout the country, including in areas controlled by the rebels.

Based on this understanding, the Sudan initiated the idea of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) and has consistently urged its implementation in cooperation with the United Nations. A number of General Assembly resolutions have commended the full cooperation between the Sudan and the United Nations in this Operation. The practical implementation of OLS has yielded a number of important observations, which we will submit to the review meeting scheduled this month in the hope of an adequate response. We urge and hope that the next phase of OLS will see a fairer distribution of relief supplies and that it will contribute further towards the development and rehabilitation process, thus promoting an environment conducive to peace and stability.

In spite of these observations, I should like to express the full commitment of the Government of the Sudan to cooperation with the United Nations in the implementation of the objectives of Operation Lifeline Sudan in accordance with the principles of neutrality, transparency and respect for the sovereignty of my country.

As mankind approaches the dawn of the new century, we hope that the United Nations will be its vehicle and bridge to a world in which hope, peace and justice will prevail. Let us unite our wills and harmonize our ideals towards the achievement of this noble objective.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, His Excellency Mr. Povilas Gylys.

Mr. Gylys (Lithuania): On behalf of the Lithuanian Government, allow me to warmly congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his election as President of the General Assembly at this session.

This session marks the fifth anniversary of the re-entrance of Lithuania into the international community of states. Five years ago, Lithuania was admitted to the United Nations. At that time, the Organization, its Member States and the peoples of the world saw the chance to seize historic opportunities created by the new international situation, with its promise of peace and stability.

The past five years leave no doubt that some of these opportunities have been taken in a positive way. We have seen that the highest levels of cooperation are possible, both internationally and regionally. The destinies of different peoples around the world have been linked as never before by the globalization of the world economy and the information superhighway.

But many cross-border issues, such as crime, drugs, environmental pollution and terrorism, pose a major challenge to us not only as individual nation-States, but as a family of nations as well. These global challenges have far-reaching implications for the world Organization.

Originally, the United Nations was entrusted with the task of ensuring world harmony. Is it no less vital today to maintain and promote this worldwide policy, as designed by the founders of the United Nations? My answer is in the positive.

For this reason, we need an Organization that can be more responsive to the demands of Member States, and Member States that act responsibly by setting realistic goals and providing the resources needed for their implementation.

During these past five years, Lithuania has progressed politically and economically. Our relations with neighbouring States are friendly and mutually beneficial, thus ensuring a secure and stable environment in the region. We are in the process of becoming integrated into European and transatlantic structures. Negotiations on accession to the World Trade Organization are well-advanced, ties with our neighbours that are members of the Central European Free Trade Agreement are gaining strength. The most valuable cooperation is being advanced with Nordic countries, the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance. These dimensions of cooperation have been fruitfully applied in other structures as well. Cooperation with the European Union on core United Nations issues — humanitarian affairs, human rights, peacekeeping, structural and financial reforms — and with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the Implementation Force mission is the best example. We are striving to deepen and broaden this cooperation.

The global challenges before us require the commitment of Member States to the goals enshrined in the United Nations Charter and call for structural and institutional reform of the Organization. We have begun the reform aimed at streamlining the functions of the United Nations and rendering its institutional structure more effective and flexible to deal with tasks which sometimes cannot be foreseen in advance. We must bear in mind that the future Organization can be only as effective as its Member States desire it to be.

First, it goes without saying that we must put the United Nations on a sound financial footing and strengthen its capacity to fulfil its vital tasks. We support the proposals put forward by the European Union in this regard. A realigned scale of assessments, annual revision of the scale, phasing out the scheme of limits, lowering the assessment floor and swift implementation of the proposals in practice would be the tools to overcome the financial crisis and would certainly be an incentive for Members to regularize payments.

Lithuania remains committed to its financial obligations to the Organization. We also reiterate our fundamental belief that the scale of assessments must reflect the capacity to pay. At a time when many countries, Lithuania included, are undergoing budgetary adjustments and reviews, sound management of the resources of the United Nations takes on added importance.

Secondly, we believe that the functioning of United Nations decision-making bodies must be improved. The Security Council makes decisions that are binding on all Member States and influences the lives of millions. It is thus essential to make the Council more representative of the world as it is today. More specifically, Lithuania has called for increasing the representational capacity of the Security Council in both categories of membership. The Government of Lithuania recognizes that developing countries have a case for improving their representation. We also recognize that some countries, such as Germany and Japan, can make a special contribution and that they are ready to assume special political, military and financial responsibility as new permanent members. In our view, due consideration should also be given to the aspirations to an additional non-permanent seat of the countries of Eastern Europe, whose numbers have tripled in recent years. We hope for agreement on the reform of the Security Council. Lithuania supports proposals to this end and encourages stronger movement by States towards negotiations on the implementation of reform.

In terms of a comprehensive reform of the United Nations system, any such reform is likely to fail if there is no clear vision of its objectives and of the strategies for pursuing them. A stark reassessment of the mission and mandates is included in the United Nations medium-term plan for 1998-2001. We consider it to be a good basis for debate on the enhancement of the United Nations and for strengthening its capacity to face new emerging challenges.

Lithuania, striving to make its contribution to international cooperation in the maintenance of security and stability, is determined to continue to improve the skills of its peacekeepers, civilian police monitors and military observers and will offer them to the United Nations in the service of peacekeeping operations. Lithuania, in cooperation with Estonia and Latvia, and also with Poland, is advancing the development of joint peacekeeping units, an exercise which in itself is a testimony to ultimate understanding and cooperation between countries.

The costs and scope of United Nations peacekeeping operations have proliferated dramatically since 1990. One of the best ways to reduce this proliferation, and more particularly to prevent human suffering, is to implement many of the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in his "An Agenda for Peace", especially in terms of resolving disputes before violence breaks out.

United Nations intervention too often comes too slowly and too late under very difficult circumstances. Lacking resources, the Secretary-General is sometimes expected to maintain peace where there is no will to maintain peace. We feel that the emphasis needs to be placed on strengthening the United Nations system's preventive capacity. We may need to adopt the multidimensional approach to the concept of security, mobilize the United Nations system in order to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflict, and attack the problem at its very roots.

Lithuania welcomes measures to strengthen the United Nations administrative structures in charge of peacekeeping operations. The experience of the past few years leads us to believe that we need to explore non-traditional approaches to conflict prevention and resolution, including the Organization's rapid response capability. While the demand in this domain still seems to be more than the United Nations is equipped for, the burden-sharing of peacekeeping with other regional organizations has to prevent the eruption of a severe crisis. The complexity of the maintenance of peace and security should not be solely a United Nations enterprise. In Europe, we have the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which operates in accordance with agreed principles and is engaged in activities to help parties to resolve disputes without recourse to fighting.

Lithuania believes that any strategy for preventing armed conflicts also involves pursuing tangible disarmament objectives, especially in the areas of nuclear non-proliferation and the control of conventional arms.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty now ready for signature can be considered one of the historic decisions of this decade. Today, I signed the Treaty on behalf of the Republic of Lithuania. I believe this tangible achievement of humankind should fuel international efforts to take further effective measures towards nuclear disarmament.

A major challenge immediately ahead is the maintenance of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We must find a key to freeze the production and development of weapons of mass destruction. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should set the tone for the disarmament process which will be accompanied by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We must cope with new nuclear challenges, such as nuclear leakage, smuggling of fissile materials, failures in nuclear-custody systems and the potential threat of nuclear terrorism.

Moreover, the dangerously widespread use of conventional weapons undermines all attempts at the peaceful solution to conflicts. Sometimes, as in the case of land-mines, the deadly consequences persist for many years, causing human suffering and resulting in enormous costs. The growing support for banning the production of and trade in anti-personnel land-mines is one way to correct this problem.

Peace and development are closely linked and development is a multifaceted process. Revitalization of the United Nations in economic, social and related fields, and interaction between the United Nations and other multilateral development institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, should be addressed to better structure the Organization for serving peoples' development needs. Sustainable development must be based on participatory democracy and respect for human rights.

Democratization must take hold inside a State and should extend to the international community. The process of democratization cannot be separated from the protection of human rights. We will continue to support United Nations programmes aimed at promoting a democratic culture and at consolidating new or re-established democracies.

Humanitarian assistance efforts face the challenge of responding to humanitarian crises that have increased both in number and complexity. United Nations programmes could complement other initiatives already in place and should be expanded in those fields where collective action is required, such as in comprehensive reconstruction and rehabilitation of war-ravaged areas.

Although the merits of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in facilitating solutions to acute migration problems are evident, some tendencies are cause for concern. The international community needs updated approaches in resolution and prevention policy. The Conference on Refugees and Migrants in the Commonwealth of Independent States and neighbouring countries, held in Geneva in May 1996, was a step towards action on a regional level. We hope that countries will adhere to the Programme of Action, in particular those provisions concerning illegal migration.

We are in favour of strengthening mechanisms to monitor and protect human rights, especially in conflict situations. When these rights are seriously violated despite all efforts to the contrary, we are in favour of turning to judicial recourse. For this reason, we support the creation of an international criminal court for the adjudication of all human rights violations, wherever they may occur.

One of the greatest challenges stymieing the efforts of the international community to ensure sustainable development and democracy is transnational crime. This often takes the form of illicit sales of arms and drugs, illicit trafficking in people, child prostitution and other crimes. No single country is able to cope with well-organized and well-financed criminal structures. We deem that efficient anti-money-laundering measures can be among the best tools to undermine the economic roots of the criminal world.

The window of opportunity for greater international cooperation is wider than at any time since 1945. We must seize the moment if international cooperation is to take a decisive step forward. A reformed and streamlined United Nations, concentrating on the tasks entrusted to it in the Charter, can make considerable progress towards fulfilling the high expectations we place in it today.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, His Excellency Mr. Talbak Nazarov.

Mr. Nazarov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me first to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We consider this to constitute recognition by the community of nations of the growing role being played by Malaysia on the world political and economic scenes.

The Republic of Tajikistan's accession to full United Nations membership five years ago marked a new page in the history of my country's relations with the Organization. Five years is, of course, a short period in history, but for our country they have been crucial. For the Tajik people, whose history over the past millennium has been full of tragic events, they were fraught with serious ordeals. These years saw both our breakthrough to sovereignty and one of the most tragic periods of our modern history: the civil war. Indeed, the question was whether one of the newest Member States was to continue to exist on the world map.

The people of Tajikistan answered this question themselves, but the historical cost of the survival of the young State, which became the object of massive aggression from united extremist forces, including attacks carried out from the southern borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), was very high.

It is already clear today that the conflict imposed on the Tajik people — an enormous human tragedy — was aimed at undermining the newly emerging foundations of the State and interfering with economic growth and market reforms and hence the country's independent development along a general democratic course. The scale of the conflict and the degree of involvement of forces from the territory of a neighbouring State posed a threat to peace and security on the Asian continent as a whole. Fortunately, in its difficult struggle for political survival, Tajikistan was not left to fend for itself. The CIS States — primarily Russia and the central Asian countries, as well as the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, supported the Republic and continue to do so.

Today, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan is concentrating its efforts on tasks whose successful accomplishment will make it possible to reconstruct the social and economic infrastructure of the southern part of the Republic, which was devastated by the civil war; to reintegrate the disrupted regional sectors of the national economy on a new basis; and to convert the distorted centralized national economy that we inherited into a modern market economy.

These tasks, difficult enough in their own right, are all the more complex because of a chronic shortage of our own financial resources. Thanks to the donor States, the United Nations specialized agencies and other international and regional organizations, Tajikistan continues to receive humanitarian support. The overall volume of the assistance received, however, is insufficient, while the economic situation inside the country continues to be very complicated.

We note with satisfaction that, given these circumstances, authoritative international financial institutions have been understanding about our growing needs. As a result, the Government of Tajikistan, supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, is making deliberate efforts to intensify the reforms, create a market economy in the country and integrate the national economy into the world trade and economic system.

A solid basis for progressive and sustainable development is being created in the country step by step. That is why the Government of Tajikistan is particularly interested in the adoption by the General Assembly at this session of decisions dealing with assistance to countries with transitional economies, taking into account the relevant provisions of the Agenda for Development. We also hope that the decisions of the most recent special session of the Commission for Social Development will be fully implemented.

As the Assembly may know, the Commission emphasized once again the necessity for United Nations financial organizations to mobilize resources in support of the national efforts of the developing countries to implement the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. This important Declaration acquires special significance on the eve of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication Poverty (1997-2006).

The stabilization of Tajikistan's economy is not only the key to satisfying the pressing social and economic needs of our people, but would without a doubt promote the process of national conciliation, social consolidation, and the strong and healthy formation of democratic institutions in the country as a whole.

As a post-socialist State at the very beginning of its democratic rejuvenation, the Republic of Tajikistan values highly the international experience it has accumulated within the United Nations. Such experience helps Governments to develop and strengthen new democracies. Drawing upon this rich international experience, my Government is purposefully taking important constitutional steps towards creating an open society. Firmly and consistently committed to the course of democratic development pursued by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, the Government of my country promotes the involvement of the broad mass of the population in social, political and economic reform processes through such mechanisms as referendums, national elections to representative bodies, renovation of the judicial system and every possible encouragement of openness.

An important practical step towards the further democratization of society was taken with the adoption of the treaty on national reconciliation in Tajikistan, initiated by the President and social organizations of the country. This treaty was signed by the leaders of the absolute majority of political parties, public movements, national associations and religious communities. We consider it to be a universal, basic document of national reconciliation that defines viewpoints for the formation of a State providing for the equal and full participation of all political and regional forces in national public life.

The people of Tajikistan made a deliberate choice in favour of democratic reforms and they are not going to give them up voluntarily. However, the course is full of obstacles, which my Government is resolved to overcome in the interests of achieving the main goal: the formation of a civil society.

One of the main problems hampering our building of a new society is an undeclared small war in the far south-east of Tajikistan and on the Tajik-Afghan border, which has been imposed on the Tajik people by the opposition Islamic Revival Movement of Tajikistan. The intransigent armed wing of the opposition is increasing tensions in the country by torpedoing the agreements reached at the inter-Tajik talks. By constantly and flagrantly violating the Tajik-Afghan sector of the southern border of the Commonwealth of Independent States, it is inflicting pain and suffering on the civil population and causing irreparable damage to the unique wildlife of the Pamir region.

The leadership of Tajikistan believes that the road to peace in the country lies through the continuation of dialogue and the resolution of existing differences through constitutional legitimacy and only by political means. The Republic of Tajikistan sincerely appreciates the active humanitarian mediation of the United Nations, which is searching for ways to resolve the conflict peacefully. My Government greatly values the personal contribution made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, his Special Representative, Mr. Gerd Merrem, and the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan to the settlement of the conflict.

We greatly appreciate the significant contribution made to the peace process by other international organizations, as well as by the States attending the talks as observers.

In particular I would like to note the constructive role played by the Russian Federation. It has given us significant and considerable assistance in protecting Tajikistan's border and ensuring security in general. We see this assistance as a strategic measure aimed at preventing the southern border of the Tajik part of the CIS from being violated. This task is being carried out by a group of Russian border patrol troops in Tajikistan, comprised for the most part of Tajik youths, and the collective peacekeeping forces with the participation of Uzbekistan, Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan.

It is appropriate to recall that the leadership of Tajikistan and the States whose military contingents are part of the collective peacekeeping forces of the CIS have repeatedly asked that these forces be granted the status of United Nations peacekeeping operation. I do not think this request is any less urgent today.

We are well aware of the fact that the only prerequisite for effective dialogue is the moral willingness of the opposing sides to reach a possible compromise. The Government of Tajikistan has repeatedly demonstrated its good will by trying to meet the other side half-way and to breathe new life into the negotiating process whenever necessary. We will not tire of walking this, the only road to peace. At the same time, we consider the demands made by the opposition for an equal division of power and, particularly, the dismantling of existing State bodies as a condition for national reconciliation to be unrealistic and designed deliberately to lead to deadlock.

The Government of Tajikistan is fully determined logically to finish what it has started and to find a mutually acceptable formula for peace in the country. And if the opposition takes a similarly constructive stance and strictly adheres to the Tehran ceasefire agreement, then there is hope that the Ashgabat agreements will lead to real political results and bring the long-awaited peace to Tajik soil. A striking illustration of this is the agreement reached on 16 September this year between the Government Commission and the opposition's field commanders that brought peace, fragile though it may be, to this long-suffering land.

The efforts of my Government to achieve peace would be even more fruitful were it not for the remaining tensions in neighbouring Afghanistan, where the situation is a humanitarian tragedy of a truly global scale. We would welcome efforts by United Nations Member States to find new ways to settle the conflict in Afghanistan. It is not only our geographical neighbour but also a country linked to Tajikistan by centuries-old historical and spiritual ties. While expressing grave concern at the latest developments in neighbouring Afghanistan, we support the steps taken by the Security Council and the General Assembly aimed at promoting a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict.

The Republic of Tajikistan, for its part, is ready to join forces with other members of the international community and contribute to this constructive process, which may have a positive influence and help stabilize the situation along the Tajik-Afghan border.

From this high rostrum, I cannot but express my gratitude to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its constructive and fruitful participation in solving a humanitarian problem: that of our refugees who have found themselves in Afghanistan as a result of the civil war. The three-year UNHCR operation in Tajikistan has ended with success. During this comparatively short period of time, with UNHCR assistance in finding a comprehensive solution to this issue, most Tajik refugees have returned to their homeland. With the support of UNHCR, the Government of Tajikistan renovated about 18,000 houses for the returned refugees. Programmes are being implemented, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, to encourage the development of small enterprises, promoting social and economic conditions that can help repatriates gradually to adapt.

The United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization have made great and invaluable contributions to health care and disease prevention for women and children in Tajikistan.

At the same time, we cannot but be concerned for the several thousand Tajik refugees still in Afghanistan. Their return to the homeland is being prevented by the armed opposition, which is linking their return to the resolution of political issues not directly related to this purely humanitarian act. We hope that, with the international community's assistance and the support of the States concerned, a rapid and definitive solution can be found to this major problem.

In this regard, I wish to express our support for the decisions of the Conference on Refugees, Returnees, Displaced Persons and Related Migratory Movements in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States held in Geneva in late May this year. It is very important that the decisions taken at this session of the General Assembly support the programme of action adopted at the Geneva conference.

We are also concerned at the fact that military training bases of fighters belonging to the armed Tajik opposition continue to operate, without hindrance, on the territory of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, itself a country that has been plagued by civil war for almost two decades.

This is where provocative cross-border sorties are carefully planned and new victims of terror and violence, including among the civilian population, are determined. Nor is it merely armed fighters that cross the Tajik-Afghan border. Beyond Pyandzh, drug manufacturing is out of control and drug trafficking and the sales of drugs to other countries, even to other continents, are consistently on the rise.

Criminal elements and groups from certain regions in Afghanistan illegally circulate arms, thus undermining Tajikistan's State security. It is well known that terrorists of every stripe have always fed off the drug trade and illegal arms sales. We, like other States, are particularly alarmed at the close relationship between some terrorist organizations and the illegal drug trade.

Drug addiction has long been one of the most terrible social scourges on Earth. In Tajikistan, which has become one of the world's "hot spots" in terms of the distribution of drugs coming from outside the country, we understand only too well the danger posed by drug abuse and illegal trafficking to people's lives, health, dignity and economic prosperity, as well as to the political stability of a State.

The consequences of these criminal acts can be felt not just in Tajikistan or the CIS, but far beyond the Commonwealth borders. All this poses a real threat to peace and stability throughout the Central and South Asian region, including Afghanistan.

The Government of Tajikistan expresses its grave concern at terrorist activity around the world. We need a united front to curb the destructive wave of terror and drastically intensify the common struggle to prevent terrorism from emerging in any form. It is particularly necessary to create a reliable barrier against terrorists' attempts to gain access to weapons of mass destruction.

While unconditionally condemning all manifestations of terrorism, the Government of Tajikistan feels that the time has come to turn anti-terrorist cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations to practical action. In this regard, we must make full use of the resources of regional organizations.

During the half a century of its existence, the United Nations has proved its viability; at the same time, however, it has reached the threshold of certain indispensable changes in its structure and activities. We feel that, in today's unstable and transitional international conditions, the role of the United Nations should steadily grow.

In our opinion, it is important to approach reform in a pragmatic way, concentrate on those issues that are ripe for resolution and maintain a reasonable balance between innovation and those mechanisms that have proved their efficiency. The most important thing is to enhance coordination within the framework of the United Nations; to focus efforts on such priorities as peacemaking, humanitarian crises, human rights, sustainable development and support to States with transitional economies; and to monitor strictly the use of limited available resources.

The Government of Tajikistan feels that the integral element in comprehensive United Nations reform is the question of the further enhancement of the role of the Security Council as the most important instrument for maintaining and strengthening international peace and security. It is also our opinion that the expansion and renewal of the Council must be carried out in keeping with Charter criteria for Council membership and the current status of its permanent members.

We think that the Security Council would be made more representative by adding not only some candidates from among the industrial Powers, such as Germany and Japan, but also some representatives from Asian, African and Latin American countries. In this connection, the proposal made by the delegation of Italy is of great interest.

In the autumn of 1995, when leaving United Nations Headquarters in New York, the leaders of the community of States once again affirmed the determination of their Governments to fight for the realization of our common ideals of peace and development, justice and sovereign equality and respect for human rights and basic freedoms, including the right to development. At that time, we adopted a historic Declaration as a commitment to the present and future generations of the Earth to exert our joint efforts to prevent a resurgence of both cold and hot wars and large-scale and small-scale conflicts in our global world.

This is why we all have a great deal of creative work ahead of us — for the sake of all mankind and for the benefit of the future of our planet Earth.

The President took the Chair.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to make an announcement concerning a change in the programme of work of the General Assembly contained in document A/INF/51/3.

Agenda item 22, entitled, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States"; agenda item 25, entitled, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community"; and agenda item 28, entitled, "Universal Congress on the Panama Canal" will be taken up on Thursday, 24 October 1996, in the afternoon, instead of on Wednesday, 23 October 1996, in the morning, as originally scheduled.

May I also remind members that the General Committee will meet tomorrow, Tuesday, 8 October 1996, at 9.15 a.m. in Conference Room 3, to consider a request for the inclusion of an additional item entitled, "Observer status for the International Seabed Authority", which has been circulated in document A/51/231.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.